

I Can't Drive  
(Fast Enough)  
to These  
55 Diners

Michael Engle

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Published by  
Michael Engle Publishing  
Speigletown, New York  
www.nydiners.com

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ISBN - 0-9769389-3-6  
Also known as 978-0-976389-3-4

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### Scrapbook Sections:

25, 43, 59, 75, 89, 104, 122, 139, 153, 170, 185, 200



## **Please Note:**

This book was written during the COVID-19 crisis. Not every diner may be back open. I did my best not to include a diner that will never reopen, but I can not guarantee every diner on this list will be back open when you receive this book.

## **About the Author:**

Michael Engle maintains the web presence known as [nydiners.com](http://nydiners.com). The web pages are dedicated to the history of diners built in the Great Lakes states and includes lists of diners in New York and a few other states. Michael maintains lists of diners built by various diner manufacturers of the past including all of the Great Lakes diner manufacturers and Valentine Manufacturing of Wichita, Kansas. Michael has picked up the work on John Shoaf who started documenting diners from Starlite Manufacturing of Ormond Beach, Florida.

Michael also has authored the following books on diners:

Diners of New York(2008) with co-author Mario Monti.

Diners of the Capital District(2011).

Diners of the Great Lakes(2019).

## **What is a diner:**

To me, a diner is a prefabricated structure which has been built at a factory and hauled to the site of operation. Diners started out before the 1920s as lunch wagons or lunch cars. They were built on wheels, with the motivation at first to easily move from site to site by horse, or as many owners would do, brought to a place on the city streets for the evening, and then back into storage during the day. Soon enough, lunch wagons became larger and larger, to the point where daily movement was becoming more difficult. Other owners tired of the daily movement. So these lunch wagons were put on permanent foundations. These lunch wagons became the diner. Some companies began to design diners in sections, over the years, even as early as the 1920s. I include these places as diners because they are built in a factory and are built with the intent for them to be diners.

## • Introduction

Almost everyone has a reason they like to travel. Diners have been a reason for my travels for many years. It is fun to go to new diners and dedicate a trip just to diner, every so often. But there is so much more to traveling than diners.

So in this book, I have included, “one other thing.” When I mention a diner, I list something in the general area that you might also enjoy doing. Some of them are typical touristy options, but I hope that some of them are out of the box, but still will pique your interest.

So 55 diners? I originally was going to list my favorite 50 diners, and that was tough enough. 55 doesn't make creating the list that much better, either. But I thought about the Sammy Hagar song, “I can't drive 55.” And it came to me, slap in a few more words, and I could have a cute title for the book.

Now, you should not agree with me on every diner on this list. And I am sure many of you will say, “What about this diner?” or “How in the world could you not include this other diner?!” And that is what make lists great. Everyone has an opinion because everyone has their own criteria. And even with my criteria, not every one of the 55 diners will fall into the criteria. Some of these diners are sentimental diners and others perfectly fall into my criteria. There are also diners that perfectly fall into the criteria listed, that jut are not on the list. There is nothing against them. Maybe I was in a bad mood when I visited them, maybe I hit too many diners that day, maybe I ordered the wrong item on their menu. Maybe I had to cut the list somewhere.

So my criteria? I actually more have preferences. I would prefer to go to a smaller diner. So people who like bright open restaurants and need extra space might not like some of the smaller diners that I enjoy visiting. I also enjoy when the owners make the whole experience that much better. They consider their job and their diner a blessing in their life. The food really does help. The quality of the food is not tops on my list, but it could easily put a diner on my list. And as I have stated on my list, there are regions of the country where I travel to more than other reasons, so there may be other diners in that region that I did not include on my list. I have sentimental favorites as well. There are diners that may not fit my criteria completely, but are still on my list.

And this list could change. I might find a new diner that really needs to be added to the list, or new owners take over a diner and the quality goes down, or they remodel the place, or even worse, the places closes for good.

With that said, have fun with this list. Agree, disagree, it's perfectly ok.

Another motivation for this book: I want people to visit diners all over the country. Maybe, just maybe, someone will read this book and want to open their own. And there are diners out there for sale. Just stay patient and you could find a diner. But operating a restaurant is a serious business, and just owning a diner is maybe 20% of the whole concept. But I digress. There are diners outside of the north-east that will give you a remarkable diner experience. And really, it does not have to be a diner on this list. Find a diner while you are traveling, and if it is good, you'll have a place to go back to; if it is bad, you'll have a story to remember, and if it is mediocre, you'll forget about it. Hopefully, it is good.

- **The order of the book:**

I live in eastern upstate New York. I could have started here and radiated out, but I was not feeling it. I thought to make this better oriented to everyone, I needed to make a better decision. Since the diners have to be in some order, I decided to start in Maine and work my way towards New York. Then in New York I will first go east to west. After New York, the trip from diner to diner will head westward along the northern half of the country. After I reach the west coast the book will head back to New York and then take a trip south to get the diners between New York and Florida, closer to the coast. That leaves two diners that don't fit any progression, so we hit those two diner and we are done with the trip.

- **Books Mentioned:**

*Classic Diners of Connecticut* by Garrison Leykam

*Classic Diners of Massachusetts* by Larry Cultrera

*Diners of New England* by Randy Garbin

*Diners of New York* by Mario Monti and Michael Engle

*Diners of Pennsylvania* by Brian Butko, Kevin Patrick and Kyle Weaver

*Jersey Diners* by Peter Genovese

*New Hampshire Diners* by Larry Cultrera

# Scrapbook Sections!

This E-book is being made available in PDF format. Being in PDF format allows the author to use forms which were created with Adobe Acrobat. For people not aware, forms are places in a file(this book) where the reader can enter text or photographs. Then they can save the book with these changes. In this book, these forms should allow the reader to Scrapbook their journey from diner to diner. It is the author's intent to have these sections act as a Scrapbook and allow the reader more motivation to visit these diners. At the same time, they can document their journey in the same book so as to keep all the information in the same place.

Travel books up to this time are all about reading. A few people are brave enough to put notes in the margins, but most people don't bother or think it is too taboo to write in a book.

This book is taking that to the next level. In this book, after 4 or 5 diners, there will be a scrapbook section where the reader can write down notes and even add a photograph from their visit to the diners in this book. When it comes to photographs, you could be simple, or you could be creative. Maybe take your favorite item and photograph it inside or outside every diner in this book. It's up to you.

The photographs need to be saved somewhere that can be connected to the device where this book is saved. The author plans to take photographs on his cell phone, hook up a cable from his cell phone to his lap-top and upload the appropriate photograph for each diner.

This is the first time the author, Michael Engle, has tried this concept, so feedback would be appreciated. Neither Michael Engle nor Michael Engle Publishing is responsible for any issues or security problems that this book may create with your device where this book is stored. With that said, make sure you get a copy of this book from a reputable place on the internet. This concept is new with the author and no malice has ever been intended, but I do not know how hackers could take advantage of this concept and create malware or worse, so be warned that it could be entirely possible.

[www.nydiners.com](http://www.nydiners.com) is your place to go for a list of places to pick up a legitimate electronic copy of this book. So if you are concerned, check the web-site first. It is possible that you may need Adobe Acrobat to be able to fill out the forms that make up the Scrapbook Section of this book. The author was unsuccessful in uploading photographs using some PDF viewers.

If you would like a version of this book without the Scrapbook Sections, the book in its original design is available on Amazon.

Enter the date in this box. You should see a box that open a calendar when you click on this region.

Click on this box to bring up a dialogue so that you can upload a photo to this section of the scrapbook. Make sure your photo is available to the device that this book is saved on.

Gibby's Diner

10040 Duaneburg Rd  
Delanson  
New York  
Date:

In this bottom box you can type in anything you want about your trip to the diner. Talk about the food, the diner. Anything you want to remember your visit. Treat this like a scrapbook recap.

On the last page of each scrapbook section there is a place to mention up to 4 additional things that you found as you were traveling. If you want, you can make this similar to the one other thing that was used in this book, or it can be anything that you desire. A couple sections have a blank diner as there are only 4 diners in certain sections instead of 5. Use this section however you see fit.

## A1 Diner

3 Bridge Street

Gardiner, Maine

207-582-4804

Impeccable Worcester Semi-Streamliner diner in a unique location. The menu is even more unique and well worth the trip on its own. Great combination of architecture and food.





A lot of people adore Maine. It is one of their favorite states. But not me. If I had the choice between going to Maine or driving around Kansas, right now I would pick Kansas. I can't tell you why. Maybe I root for the underdog a lot. But with that said, I really do appreciate all 50 states for what they offer, and you should use the A1 Diner as an excuse to go to Maine sometime if you feel the same way I do. There are other good diners in Maine that would have made this book if I was a frequent traveler to Maine. But alas.

It needs to be stated that Mike Giberson & Neil Anderson do not own or operate the diner any longer, but the legacy they gave the diner needs to be highlighted. The menu, as it stands at the A1 Diner is due in part to Mike & Neil in knowing what to keep, what to change and what to add. A part of it was trial and error, but an even more important part was in knowing what to try. Mike kept the macaroni and cheese the same, not baked. Maurice Wakefield believed that this method preserved its cream texture. But Mike also added items like Wild mushroom ragout or risotto with Asian Chicken as rotating specials.

One of the first items they added to the menu was Mexican chicken pie. It took time for items like these, especially in an old mill town like Gardiner, to catch on, but slowly but surely fresh faces started coming in and ordering more of these new items off of the menu.



The A1 Diner is a 1946 Worcester Diner and is numbered 790. Heald put his name baked into the porcelain enamel on the front of the diner, so even though the diner is today called the A1 Diner, you will see the words Heald's Diner embedded on the front of the diner. Heald also placed the diner in a unique location. The diner sits on steel girders twenty feet above the ground attached to the building in the back that acts as the kitchen for the diner.

Maurice Wakefield bought the diner in 1952 from Eddie Heald. In "A1 Diner. Real Food, Recipes & Recollections," by Sarah Ralph, Maurice is quoted saying, "On the left behind the counter is where the grill was, and the fryolator. On the right was the steam table.... Everything hot was kept on the steam table - the meat loaf and the macaroni and cheese and all. Out back was practically nothing but a dishwasher and two nice work tables." Later, Maurice would move the grill to the back kitchen to discourage short order cooks from chatting with their friends at the counter too much.

Maurice sold the diner in 1979 to Albert "Gibey" & Elizabeth Giberson. "Gibey" was operating the diner when a McDonald's came to Gardiner and took away a fair amount of breakfast business. He was nearing the thought of selling the diner. In talking with his son living in Los Angeles, his son said, "Don't do anything. I'm coming home." Mike came home and helped out with the diner and shortly brought his partner Neil Anderson with him. In 1987, "Gibey" gave Mike & Neil free reign with the expectation they would purchase the diner when they had the money. Slowly but surely Mike began to put new items into the menu and change things he felt needed changing. They purchased the diner in 1988 and continued with the changes. In 1990 the diner became an early proponent of no-smoking. Mike & Neil continued on until 2018 when they sold the diner to Aaron Harris who worked at the diner for years. Mike & Neil feel the A1 Diner is in good hands.

**One other thing:** Maine State House

<http://legislature.maine.gov/lis/security-screening/9120>

One year after Augusta became the capital of Maine, the State House was completed. The year was 1832. The building was made out of granite which came from Hallowell, Maine. Practically all of the state capitols in this country are beautiful stone buildings which offer either guided or self-guided tours. The old copper roof on the Augusta building was replaced recently, and some of the copper was saved, to be used as souvenirs and a small amount sold to artists to make various artwork.



## Littleton Diner

145 Main Street

Littleton, New Hampshire

603-444-3994

Other than the fake mansard roof on top of the Littleton Diner, not much has changed since 1940 in this quiet northern New Hampshire village. The diner continues to serve dependably good food.





The Littleton Diner is another diner I have only been to once. The diner is located in a village with the same name. One reason for my lack of travels to Littleton is that it is almost like it is cut off from the rest of the state by the Franconia Notch. This part of New Hampshire is probably more popular for tourists from Boston and New England than other places. Randy Garbin in “Diners of New England” say this about Littleton, “...today visitors find a bustling tourist-oriented boutique community complete with charming bookstores, fancy restaurants and brewpub.”

Then there is the Littleton Diner. A diner among fancy restaurants, similar to the Tastee Diner in Bethesda. But it works! It works in part because there are still a good number of people who do not like fancy, it works because there are people who like a good diner. The restaurant is true blue diner. They do offer yogurt with granola, but really the menu is old school diner with omelets. I guess you could call the three different choices of pancakes fancy: whole wheat, buckwheat or buttermilk.

For lunch they have soups, salads, and chili. Maybe you could call paninis and wraps fancy, but more people see it as just keeping up with the times. The Littleton Diner does have a really nice variety of these items, along with burgers and some sandwiches which they call specialty sandwiches like a cranberry melt or a fishwich. Dinner gets back to a more traditional state. They have meatloaf, turkey dinner, both made on premises and even New England beans and franks. The Littleton Diner also serves a north-east favorite, fried haddock.

The current Sterling diner is the second diner on this spot. The original Ward & Dickinson diner spent a few years in Cortland, New York before being traded in for a 40 foot Ward & Dickinson. That old 30 foot model sat idle for over a year before being purchased by Eugene O. & Stella Stone in January of 1930, moving to Littleton and opening to the public sometime later in 1930. An addition was added to the diner for more customer space before the current Sterling diner was bought into Littleton in 1940 to replace the older Ward & Dickinson diner. Their website says the older diner was sold, but not where it ended up going. But the Sterling diner would stay at this location to the day. Not much has changed over the years. A fake roof has been added to the diner and an additional diner room has been added to the diner. Another Sterling diner on my list, Danny's Diner in Binghamton, New York also has a similar fake roof added to their diner. Also the kitchen has been rehabbed over the years, but the heart and soul of the diner, for the most part, has stayed the same.

The Sterling diner still has its original porcelain enamel panels on the exterior that say "Littleton Diner". The interior still has its original counter, which many Sterling diners can not say. The original counter was made of glass and stays that way to this day. This rarity for today's world could just be reason enough to visit for many diner fanatics. Another Sterling diner on my list, the Swan Street Diner in Buffalo, New York also has its glass counter. One of the few things that has changed is the floor. A generic tile floor has been added to the diner. Although with the severity of the winters and the snow in northern New Hampshire, it might have been a real necessity. Note the wooden booths. Most older diners no longer keep their wooden booths around any longer. They prefer to have the cushiony, plusher diner booths, so that their customers are more comfortable. But the Littleton Diner has kept the original booths around.

**One other thing:** Franconia Notch

<https://www.cannonmt.com/>

Even though the Old Man on the Mountain fell off the mountain on May 3, 2003, there are still things you can do to celebrate its legacy. You could ride America's first aerial tramway to Cannon Mountain's 4,080 foot tall summit. You could also take the .75 mile hike to Artists' Bluff, which offers some really nice views. These are only two of the things that are available to visitors to the Franconia Notch area of New Hampshire, but if you check the web-site you will find more options.

## Four Aces Diner

23 Bridge Street

Lebanon, New Hampshire

603-298-5515

Not that I want every diner to be partially hidden in a building, but the building and diner here match each other. Before this, the inside is great and the food helps to make this a great experience.





The Four Aces Diner sits a stone's throw from the Connecticut River and a short drive south of Dartmouth College. The diner also sits in a town that is at the junction of two Interstates heading into the mountains of Vermont and New Hampshire. With the location, you can be sure that the Four Aces Diner received more than its share of tourists. And at the Four Aces Diner, the tourists get some good diner food.

For pastries they offer a popover with maple butter, cinnamon monkey bread and a sticky bun. They do have the typical breakfast items, but they also order things you don't see everywhere like chicken and waffles and avocado toast.

Lunch is similar. A few typical items followed by things you don't see in every diner. Being in New England they do offer New England clam chowder. They also have a couple of salad options and not only can you add chicken, but you can also add a piece of salmon to your salad. When I order french fries, my favorite are hand cut fries. Not only does the Four Aces Diner serve hand cut fries, but they also have hand cut onion rings. They also offer the traditionally Canadian item, poutine, french fries covered with cheese curds and brown gravy.

According to their web-site, they now offer seafood and bbq during the hours that the diner is open, which are breakfast and lunch. To me it seems odd to order bbq or seafood for breakfast, but maybe people are getting items to go for later. Some of the items available are clam strips, lobster roll, fish and chips made with haddock and lobster mac & cheese.



The Four Aces Diner is Worcester Lunch Car number 837, built in 1952, one of Worcester's later models of diners. The exterior has red vertical flutes like a number of New Jersey diner manufacturers would use on the outside of their diners, especially Kullman. By 1952, the majority of New Jersey diner manufacturers were using stainless steel and some colored panels as highlights.

The interior of the Four Aces is also a mix of styles for Worcester. Gone were the wood or wood laminated ceiling panels. They were replaced by Formica panels. The tile-work and counter top were similar to Worcester's past and the booths were still made of wood. The porcelain enamel panels above the back bar were replaced with stainless steel surrounding the menu boards.

Roy Stewart was the first owner of the diner. He placed the diner just up the street from its current location at the corner of North Main and Dana Streets. The book, "Diners of the Northeast," by Donald Kaplan and Allyson Bellink reported that the diner used to have a fantastic rooftop sign that went missing due to a college fraternity prank.

Sometime in the mid 1960s, Phil & Dot Gomez purchased the diner. They operated it until 1986 when they sold the diner to Phil Manns & Jim Burnham. Manns & Burnham sold the property the diner sat on and moved the diner to its current location. When the diner was placed at the current location, they had a large building built around the diner so all you can see is the front of the diner. The diner was sold to the Shorey family in 1989 who ran or leased the diner for various times in the following thirty years. Currently Steve Shorey and his sister Leann Briggs operate the diner.

**One other thing:** King Arthur Flour

<https://www.kingarthurbaking.com/visit>

Just across the Connecticut River sits the headquarters for King Arthur Flour in Norwich, Vermont. As they say, "Some come to Vermont for the foliage and the hiking; some come for our chocolate croissants and warm baguettes!" This is more than just a store where you can buy some King Arthur products and a few bakery items. This place is way more than that. At the King Arthur headquarters, you can take baking classes to help you improve your baking game. You can take day long or even week long classes on the art of baking. If you are just a novice, you can watch their bakers craft up some of their signature items and hopefully pick up some inspiration. If you're not full from the Four Aces, you can even sit down in their cafe and enjoy some coffee and dessert.

## Seaplane Diner

307 Allens Avenue

Providence, Rhode Island

401-941-9547

Nice diner, well run in all aspects. Come lunch time on the weekdays, the menu almost magically changes and offers seafood and Italian specials like you would find at a great Italian restaurant.





When Randy Garbin penned, “Diners of New England” in 2005, he wrote about the Seaplane Diner, “The Seaplane is located on a main thoroughfare in the city’s underutilized seaport district, where plans to redevelop the tank farms and idle port facilities into condos and upscale shopping have already begun. The diner, a vestige of the city’s blue collar past, continues today to hum along with its humble menu of meat-and-potatoes comfort food and big fresh sandwiches, and with any luck will continue to do so for many more years.”

Today, the area around the Seaplane Diner is still industrial. When I was in the diner recently, I could look outside across the street and see a pile of wood chips in one direction and a scrap pile of metal in the other. The railroad tracks that were used to go from industrial businesses is still embedded in the road. They don’t look like they have been used in awhile, but they are still there. It seems that the redevelopment has stayed away from the vicinity of the Seaplane, fortunately.

Providenceonline.com, just last year said, “The menu offers the standard diner comforts like eggs, pancakes, and waffles. But at 11am, the lunch specials roll out. Lobster ravioli, shrimp tortellini Alfredo, and chicken Marsala are served along with burgers, fries, and meatloaf dinners. Fridays feature fresh seafood. Very few items on the menu are priced over \$10.”

This is a really good representation of the menu at the Seaplane Diner. There is nothing wrong with the menu for breakfast. It is good in its own right, but come lunch, something different happens. It is as if a diner got fused with an Italian restaurant. Back to breakfast. A couple of things stand out as different from other diners outside of Rhode



Island, but typical for any place inside Rhode Island. Linguica. Linguica is a Portuguese sausage. Just like chorizo, both meats have paprika and garlic, but unlike chorizo which is dry cured, linguica is often smoked and needs to be cooked before serving.

The next uniquely Rhode Island item on the menu is coffee milk. When you hear coffee milk, think chocolate milk, but with coffee syrup. Coffee milk is the official drink of Rhode Island and I can say that I am a fan of the stuff. There are two major brands and some families and restaurants swear by either one or the other. They are Autocrat and Eclipse. Even though Autocrat bought out Eclipse in 1991, they have kept the two formulas the same. There is even a small but growing line of boutique no high fructose corn syrup brands.

The diner started out in Woonsocket and was known as Gerald's Diner while there in Woonsocket. The diner was moved to the area of the Providence seaport (which does not exist today) and aptly named the Seaport Diner. When Randy Garbin wrote about the Seaplane, Bob Arena and his son Michael were running the diner and had been operating it since some time in the 1970s. David Penta is the current owner. He retired from a state engineering job and was introduced to the restaurant and diner world by his friend Michael Arena. Together they also own other restaurants including the West Side Diner which is a even more gorgeous 1947 Kullman diner. The West Side Diner was first known as Poirier's Diner and went through a number of name changes before closing in 1999. Jon Özbek purchased the diner in 2003 and restored the diner and rented it out to Penta and Arena.

### **One other thing: Duckpin Bowling**

<http://www.robinsweb.com/duckpin/duckpin-locations.html>

I used to be a big bowler, but my interest waned. Though I have always been interested in the other more obscure forms of bowling like candlepin, duckpin and even rubberband duckpin bowling. Southern New England is home to duckpin bowling and central and northern New England is home to candlepin bowling.

In the days when there were no pinsetting machines, only pin boys, many bowling alleys would use candlepins or duckpins in the summer months. In some parts of the country, it caught on.

To picture duckpin bowling, think of a regular bowling alley, take a bocce ball and imagine you could physically squeeze the pins downward to make them half the height.

## Zips Diner

Route 101 & Route 12

Dayville, Connecticut

860-774-6335

A pristine diner that just gets it right. All of the time. The food is good, the food is dependable, the food is affordable. All housed in a 1954 O'Mahony. Visit.





The north east section of Connecticut is far more rural than the rest of the state. This has cut down on the number of diners in this section of the state, but the quality of Zip's Diner more than makes up for the lack of diners. For me, this is a region I don't usually go to unless I want to take the long way into Rhode Island, or purposefully go out of my way.

Zip's is another diner that goes out of their way to mention the celebrities that have graced the doors of the diner, but really, the customers who come back again and again, the regulars, they are the stars of any diner. And customers do come back. Zip's has a dependable set of regulars who are supplemented by the travelers who exit nearby Interstate 395 on their way through eastern Connecticut.

The diner also has been a celebrity in its own right. Bill Griffith who pens "Zippy the Pinhead" has included the diner in his cartoon panels a number of times. One time the main character, Zippy, is quoted saying, "Am I now to partake of th' nectar of th' gods & then be transported to paradise in a golden Cadillac?" Before entering the diner in the next panel.

Zip's offers breakfast all day. All the items served for breakfast are your typical items. Everything is just done right, otherwise the customers would not continue to come back. In perusing their specials for dinners, I saw items like chicken or eggplant parm with pasta, salad and garlic bread, Swedish meatballs or a smoked half chicken with a side. All three of these dinner specials were under \$10. The diner has various rotating soups each day.

The pies are said to be good home-made pies, but as you will see in the One other thing, I usually skip dessert in this part of the country.

Zip's Diner is a 1954 O'Mahony. For the owner, the diner replaced a 1946 O'Mahony diner that Henry "Zip" Zehrer ran in Danielson. The 1946 O'Mahony looked just like the Tastee Diner in Silver Spring, Maryland. I do not know if the older diner was traded in, or sold to a new party, but Zehrer moved his business to the current 1954 O'Mahony. I also do not know if Zip knew about the impending limited access highway to be built just east of the diner or if that was just pure coincidence.

In 1960, the diner was purchased by Conrad & Olive Jodoin. Their three sons and daughter all pitched in with the operation of the diner. By 1980, Tom took over with brothers Robert & James working in the kitchen. Nancy's son, Kevin Cole, purchased the diner in 2010.

The diner is a beautiful sight for diner fans. The tower on top of the diner spells out EAT (neon at night) and beckons drivers who pass by to stop. The diner is mostly stainless steel on the outside. Zips has stainless vertical flutes with red vertical highlights in between each flute. O'Mahony typically did not use this style, but when they did, it really came out looking good. It is a reverse color effect of what a company like Kullman would do with their vertical flutes. The inside is pristine as well. Proprietor Kevin Cole commented in "Classic Diners of Connecticut" by Garrison Leykam, "The booths are all original, except they have been reupholstered. Some changes had to be made due to the age of the diner and normal wear and tear. For example, the stools were replaced because the stainless could not be repaired, and the Formica on the counter-tops had to be replaced."

### **One other thing: UConn Dairy Bar**

<https://dining.uconn.edu/uconn-dairy-bar/>

I am a fan of places that make their own ice cream. If I have the choice between a store brand being dished out or a place that makes their own, I'm going to try the "home-made" ice cream every time. And I do have a favorite. The UConn Dairy Bar on the campus of the University of Connecticut is my favorite. Yes, it is nice and it is novel that they make their ice cream with the cows that the college owns and uses also for educational purposes, but the ice cream is just superior to any other ice cream I have taste, so far. Coffee ice cream is usually my go to, and their is my favorite anywhere, but their chocolate is quite intense and to me, really knocks it out of the ballpark.

They also make cheese and sell eggs at the Dairy Bar. You can also get half gallons to do a some various ice cream cakes and ice cream sandwiches.

## A1 Diner

3 Bridge St

Gardiner

Maine

Date:



## Littleton Diner

145 Main St

Littleton

New Hampshire

Date:



## 4 Aces Diner

23 Bridge St  
West Lebanon  
New Hampshire

Date:



A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a drawing or photograph.

## Seaplane Diner

307 Allens Ave  
Providence  
Rhode Island

Date:



A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a drawing or photograph.

# Zips Dining Car

Rte 101 and 12  
Dayville  
Connecticut  
Date:

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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

①	
②	
③	
④	

## Boulevard Diner

155 Shrewsbury Street

Worcester, Massachusetts

508-791-4535

The beacon of diners in a town that oozes diners. I hear that there are diners with better food in Worcester, but with my adoration for the Boulevard Diner, I frankly don't care.







Worcester, Massachusetts gives you a good number of diners to choose from and it makes total sense once you learn a little bit about diner history. Worcester was one of the first cities to have lunch wagons patrol the streets overnight. It was also home to the Worcester Lunch Car Company which sent most of its diners to various New England locations.

Worcester and vicinity is home to more than a few colleges. The Boulevard Diner has breakfast omelets specials like you would see at any diner, except at the Boulevard they are named after each one of the colleges. The Becker: Italian sausage, peppers, onions, cheese omelet and a friend's personal favorite, The Assumption: 3 eggs, sausage, cheddar and American cheese between two pieces of French toast.

For lunch and dinner, the diner specializes in a number of Italian favorites. The lasagna is probably my favorite. And they don't skimp on the portion. They also serve Italian items like manicotti, meatballs and chicken parmesan. They also serve other favorites like Salisbury steak or even American chop suey.

The Italian bread that they buy for the diner is simply incredible. I know I have bought a loaf to take home with me a number of times. They even use this bread to make their French toast, so if you like French toast, be sure to try it at least once.

The diner is open 24 hours a day, so the vibe changes based upon the time you enter.

The Boulevard Diner was built by the Worcester Lunch Car Company in 1936 and has a serial number of 730. The Worcester Lunch Car Company started in 1906 with their first lunch car and numbered it 101 as to not make it sound like they were starting from scratch with diner number 1.

Fred Galanto ran the Boulevard Diner until he sold the diner to John “Ringo” George sometime in the 1960s. George was a longtime employee under Galanto and would run the diner until his death in 1992. By 1999 his son Jim George decided to officially take over the diner. After some extensive refurbishing inside and out, Jim has continued on in excellent fashion offering a diner that is a testament to the Worcester Lunch Car Company and the diner world itself.

The Boulevard Diner was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. And by studying the diner and its history, it is easy to see why. The exterior with its porcelain enamel siding stating “Boulevard Diner” and Worcester’s famous line, “Tables for Ladies” on the side of the diner. The neon sign that Jim George restored also helps to highlight the diner. The interior is impeccable. From the original Tennessee marble counter to the wooden booths, tile work and gumwood paneling on the ceiling, this diner is a work of art that functions all day and all night. The menu is old school at the Boulevard Diner. Everything except for the college special omelets are up on the board above the grill and coffee maker.

It also needs to be said that the George family and the diner does a great job with helping the community that keeps it surviving. They had a food panty during the Covid scare and rarely turns a customer away when they do not have enough money for a meal.

**One other thing:** Shrewsbury Street

<https://shrewsburystreet.org/>

The road that the Boulevard Diner stands on is known as Restaurant Row in Worcester. Besides two other diners in various stages of originality there are more than enough restaurant options with various styles of food and price points to satisfy most everyone. There are other businesses on the four lane stretch of Shrewsbury Street that you can see listed on the web-site, but really, Shrewsbury Street is dominated by the 40+ restaurants. To be honest, Worcester is too far from where I live to go to any place other than the Boulevard Diner or occasionally the Parkway Diner, so you will need to do your own research.

# Miss Florence Diner

99 Main Street

Northampton, Massachusetts

413-584-3137

The neon sign on top of the roof ranks up there for best diner signage. But it doesn't end there. This is a classic Worcester diner that serves good food and serves its community very well.





The breakfast menu at the Miss Florence Diner is quite vast. There are a number of named omelets which is then followed by a choice for the customer to build their own omelet. Corned beef hash is a favorite with many people at the Miss Florence. Just like there are a good number of omelets listed, there are also just as many, if not more choices of pancakes on the menu. Just a few choices are blueberry, banana and walnut, pumpkin and chocolate chip pancakes. Then there are options like Belgian waffles, french toast and country fried steak and eggs.

For lunch the Miss Florence Diner offers sandwiches, wraps, burgers, salads and melts. Then they also offer hot sandwiches like the Monte cristo, thanksgiving day sandwich, chicken cordon blue, meatball and pot roast sandwiches.

I am a big fan of their turkey dinner. The turkey slices are some of the thickest slices I have seen anywhere. Current owner Georgianna Brunton has brought back dinners three days of the week. Under the former ownership, hours of operation was reduced so that dinner service was no longer available at the diner.

The original diner is to the left of the current entryway, measuring only thirty feet long. To the right of the entryway is the L shaped addition that was added by the Worcester Lunch Car Company. Both sides have porcelain enamel on the outside, in typical Worcester style. To the left of the entryway, you will find the counter, which has been completely redone and a row of booths along the wall, which is covered in porcelain enamel, not tile. To the right of the door are a number of booths, on both sides of the walkway to the back entrance and the bathrooms. The ceiling was also redone, replacing Formica panels with wood laminate.

The Miss Florence Diner is a 1941 Worcester Lunch Car. The diner was originally located in downtown Northampton and was moved to the Florence section of town in 1949 when a L shaped addition was added on to the diner by the Worcester company. At this time, the famous neon sign was put a top of the diner, as well. The addition allowed for more booth seating. When you enter the diner and look at the floor tile, you can see where the original diner stop and where the addition starts.

Maurice Alexander started the diner in 1941 and the diner stayed in the family until 2001 when the diner was sold to Konstantine Sierros. The Alexander family also turned the house in the back into a separate restaurant that catered to a different clientele. When Konstantine Sierros took over ownership, as Randy Garbin noted in "Diners of New England," he spent nine months attending to years of deferred maintenance. Among the things he did was to completely renovate the kitchen and other necessary changes. The original wood booths were long gone by 2001, but Konstantine brought back new wooden booths. He also put in new ceiling panels and completely redid the counter in pink granite. The name of Alexander's Restaurant was changed to the Silk City Tap Room. In 2003, John Zontouliadis took over the diner and ran it until 2017. During this time he stopped serving dinners at the diner. He placed the diner for sale, putting out advertisements a number of times. On the third try, Georgianna Brunton contact John and a deal was made to purchase the diner. John stayed around for 30 days to mentor Georgianna as she had never operated a diner. Prior to owning the diner, she worked as a sales manager for the Common Man Restaurant in Claremont, New Hampshire. The Common Man chain does operate a couple of diners in that state.

**One other thing:** Downtown Northampton

<https://visithampshirecounty.com/>

Northampton has won an award as the best small arts town in the nation. Maybe it is because of the number of colleges in the area, maybe not, but Northampton has become a really quaint walkable community with a eclectic assortment of shops and services. There are a number of concert halls, mostly smaller ones, but they do have the Iron Horse Music Hall that gets mid sized musicians. Eclectic shoppers might like Brits R US which sell a number of British and Irish products. People looking for an upscale hotel might like the Hotel Northampton. Familiars Coffee & Tea is housed in a diner on Strong Street and there is also another diner on US Route 5 north of town.



## Blue Benn Diner

318 North Street

Bennington, Vermont

802-442-5140

The Blue Benn Diner is a favorite of its customers and of the national and regional media publications, And justly so, the food is always satisfying and the diner is a true gem.





Some diners get all the attention. This describes the Blue Benn Diner to a tee. The Blue Benn seems to make every list of favorite diners, and is pretty much guaranteed to be on any New England list. Under the ownership of Franklin “Sonny” & Marylou Monroe, there was very good reason for that. Was? Unfortunately in the summer of 2020, the diner was sold to Bennington College alum John Getchell who plans to keep the diner the same when he reopens.

One of the reasons the diner is on every list is its extensive menu. The diner has everything you would expect on a menu, actually on their menu, but then many many many other options put on to colored paper and taped below the menu board. [Sevendaysvt.com](http://Sevendaysvt.com) added, “Along with classic fare such as hot turkey sandwiches and chocolate cream pie, Sonny Monroe broadened the menu over his tenure to include falafel burgers and legendary “crunchberry” pancakes.” Randy Garbin in, “Diners of New England,” added, “The Benn, for instance, has served tabouleh since the 1970s, and vegetarians have long found themselves welcome in a settingg that has historically catered exclusively to the meat-and-potatoes crowd. Still, no one does classic comfort foods better than the Blue Benn, to which the everpresent sight of fresh-made donuts in a large glass jar attests.”

The Blue Benn Diner is the 15th Silk City diner built in 1948. That makes the number on the tag above the door #4815. During this time, Silk City was building over a hundred diners a year. Even though, in the diner world, they were a dime a dozen, doesn't mean a good one isn't anything special. How many other 1948 Silk City diners can you name? Plus, in this book, I'm looking for places that are both an excellently preserved diner and memorable food.

I do not have a complete list of owners of the Blue Benn Diner. Bud and Betty Vallee owned the diner from 1959 to 1973. Franklin "Sonny" & Marylou Monroe have owned the diner since 1973. With their daughter, Lisa LaFlamme, working at the diner since age 10 and now serving as manager. In the summer of 2020, they sold the diner to John Getchell. Lisa said she has been thinking about selling the diner for three years, and when "Sonny" passed away in 2019, she lost more than her father.

The diner is very original on the inside and on the outside. On the inside you will find your typical Silk City diner. barrel roof with tanish yellow panels. The floor has the same tile pattern as other Silk City diners, but it has blue tiles instead of the typical brown. The diner has 20 stools and 6 booths. Like many small busy places, they have a policy that you can not sit at the stools if you intend to later move into a booth. So nearly every weekend, you will see parties of 4 or more waiting in the entryway for a booth to open while locals are going ahead of them because they're perfectly fine with sitting at the counter. Although the diner does all the cooking in the back kitchen, the counter is still the best seat in the house in my opinion.

**One other thing:** Route 7A to Manchester

Search Historic Route 7A Vermont, no direct web-site

Many people remember that slow two lane road that you traveled to get to your favorite vacation spot years ago. The road was lined with motels and the road was slow with traffic. Well, I got good news for you. This Route 7 has been bypassed by a limited access road, so you'll be able to enjoy the road without constant backups. You have a number of roadside stands that have local produce and food items like the Chocolate Barn, Wilcox Ice Cream Stand, and a fair number of restaurants to choose from. Hotels range from exclusive places in Arlington and Manchester to well kept old time motels along the route. You can take the tolled Mount Equinox Skyline Drive if you want to enjoy the scenery from up high. You will end up in Manchester Center which is a mix of outlet shopping and more.



## Birdseye Diner

590 Main Street

Castleton, Vermont

802-468-5817

When it comes to the Birdseye Diner, it is hard to choose if the ride or the destination is the important thing here. The drive into Vermont, if you take the right roads, is a joy, but the diner and the food at the Birdseye stands on its own.





The Birdseye Diner is another diner in a small college town. Castleton, Vermont is a very small village, not even any typical downtown buildings. For the most part, Castleton sports a gas station, convenience store, post office and a diner. But boy does this diner do an excellent job serving a mix of unique selections and specials and classic diner food. My favorite item at the Birdseye Diner are the onion rings. These are not your ordinary onions rings. Not only are they freshly made, but they are thin cut onion rings, which I have not had anywhere

else. Even though I love fresh cut french fries, I never seem to order them at the Birdseye Diner because of the onion rings.

Even with the additional seating in the next door building and some outdoor seating, weekends can find the place full of customers. They come for the a mix of the drive, ambiance of a classic diner and the to the point good diner food. About as exotic as they get might be some of their specials like banana and chocolate chip pancakes or a sausage and smoked cheddar omelet.

If you have the stomach, a good choice might be to stop for breakfast at the Blue Benn Diner and take the scenic route up to the Birdseye Diner for lunch.

The addition brings many more seats to the Birdseye Diner and is a more modern interpretation of diner seating. Housed in a brick building it still does fit in well with the original diner. The current Birdseye Diner has had outside seating in warmer months for a number of years.

The Birdseye Diner is a 1940s Silk City diner that did not arrive in Castleton until the 1960s. The current Birdseye replaced an older diner that had burned to the ground. Before donning the Birdseye Diner name, previous names include Jim's Diner, Campus Diner and TJ's Diner. Over the years, the diner became encased in plywood. In 1995, a hero came to the rescue. John and Pam Rehlen bought the diner in 1995 and hired Daniel Zilka to perform a masterpiece.

The Rehlems also own two other businesses in Castleton, so it became important to them to have the diner look as awesome as they knew it could look. And Daniel Zilka did not disappoint. He stripped away the plywood and pitched roof and many other additions to reveal and restore the classic 1940s Silk City diner.

Silk City diners were built in Paterson, New Jersey and were one of the leaders in making New Jersey the diner state not only for the construction, but also for the location of diners. One thing that helped was that Silk City was building so many diners a year in the 1940s. Each of the diners was of similar construction, with the owner maybe choosing the color scheme if they so desired. The Birdseye Diner's primary color is a light yellow. You can find it on the inside and on the outside of the diner.

## **One other thing: Gateway to Vermont**

### **Various Sites**

People coming from the south or the west often choose to enter Vermont along the US Route 4 corridor which quickly brings you to Castleton. To be honest, this is one place where you don't even need a destination. Let the road take you to something interesting. You might find a small country store which are justly famous in Vermont. You might find a roadside stand which sells fresh foods in the summer months and meats and cheeses in all of the seasons. Vermont is an up and coming destination for cheese makers. A fair number of places either butcher their own meats or hire a local butcher to cut up and package their products. Also, if you do a little research, you can find some excellent bakeries nearby. If you head south east to a place like Sissie's Kitchen, in Middletown Springs you'll find a quaint restaurant that has excellent frozen meals that you can take home if you properly prepare a container for frozen foods. I recommend the French Canadian Tourtiere which is a french meat pie traditionally found in french New England. Places like Vergennes, Manchester or Rutland will be sure to have places that will surprise and delight you.

## Foote's Port Henry Diner

5 St. Patrick's Place

Port Henry, New York

518-546-7600

Restored in the 1990s. This great Ward & Dickinson diner is in the shadows of the Adirondacks and a meal here would be a great way to start a trip.





Foote's Port Henry Diner is the gold standard of Ward & Dickinson diners. Not everything is original to the diner, but former owners Hank D'Arcy & Linda Mullin hired Edward LeClair to get it as close as possible to its original standards. The interior has a marble counter top, even on the two booths. See if you can tell which booth is original and which is the replacement? The fridge in the diner is a thing of beauty. If you want to sit at a table, you can sit in the dining room, but I hope you choose to sidle up to the counter and get the true experience.

I am very biased when it comes to Ward & Dickinson diners. They are my favorite builder, so to see a Ward this nice, with good food, it really elevates the diner game to a new level. Today, the ceiling and walls are painted in a beige with light gray highlights. The outside is beige with black highlights. Out of the factory it would have had candy green highlighting on the inside and on the outside. The swirled green glass in the upper sash was actually part of the design patent for Ward & Dickinson diners after 1927. There is a small tag under one of the bread drawers that shows this is diner #187.

As the onlyinyourstate.com web-site states, "Foote's takes your average diner food and elevates it with unique twists that will make your mouth water." For breakfast Foote's has a somewhat limited regular menu with items like omelets, pancakes, french toast and breakfast sandwiches which you can get on a home made roll. On the weekends they often will have various quiches available. For lunch they serve burgers and a few sandwiches and again, they have specials most days.



Foote's Port Henry Diner is a late 1920s Ward & Dickinson diner and has a serial number of 187. The story goes that the diner started out in Glens Falls as an actual traveling lunch wagon that would go from factory site to factory site. At the time, Glens Falls was big in the paper and pulp business as logs would be sent down the Hudson River from the Adirondacks. Glens Falls was also a big lunch wagon - diner town. They had two other Ward & Dickinson diners in town at the time, and Albert Closson sold his lunch wagons he built out of Glens Falls about twenty years ago.

Wilford & Grace Tario bought and brought the diner to Port Henry early in 1933. They ran the diner for a couple of years, added a separate dining room and then sold the diner to Stanley Zelinsky who ran it for over twenty-five years. By the time the year got to 1992, the diner had a couple more owners and had been covered over with plywood.

Mike Darius purchased the diner at auction because he believed the diner needed to be saved and restored. He started the work but was unable to accomplish the finished project. Fortunately, Darius sold the diner to Linda Mullin & Hank D'Arcy who succeeded! They hired Edward LeClair to do the majority of the carpentry work. When they planned to reopen December 14, 1996, they brought Grace Tario, age 97 in a limousine to be at the event.

Mullin & D'Arcy sold the diner and the diner went through multiple proprietors who made slight alterations here and there, but fortunately didn't cause too much damage. Finally Don Foote bought the diner in 2012 to get back into the restaurant business and has flourished at the diner.

**One other thing:** Lake Placid & Saranac Lake

<https://www.lakeplacid.com/> & <https://www.saranaclake.com/>

When many people think of Lake Placid, they think of the 1980 Olympics. Both Saranac Lake and Lake Placid are tourist get-away destinations in all seasons. In the summer people use both villages as a destination to beat the heat and stroll the downtown shops and restaurants. Lake Placid, as you might know, the place where the miracle on ice occurred.

It is just a short scenic drive to Saranac Lake. Their web-site is much easier to navigate and seems to have many more options to choose from. Saranac Lake has a number of museums and a carousel. You will have a vast choice for places to stay overnight. The Hotel Saranac dominates the skyline downtown and tops the high end experience and actually just reopened in 2018 after a vast renovation.

## Boulevard Diner

155 Shrewsbury St  
Worcester  
Massachusetts

Date:



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## Miss Florence Diner

99 Main St  
Florence  
Massachusetts

Date:



\_\_\_\_\_



## Blue Benn Diner

314 North St  
Bennington  
Vermont

Date:



## Birdseye Diner

590 Main St  
Castleton  
Vermont

Date:



## Foote's Port Henry Diner

5 St. Patrick's Pl  
Port Henry  
New York

Date:

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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

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②	
③	
④	

## Gibby's Diner

10040 Duanesburg Road

Delanson, New York

518-895-2063

One of the few diners where their dinners outshine everything else. Even better that the interior of the original diner part of the restaurant is in really nice shape. The perfect diner because it has the mix of great looking diner and great tasting food.





Gibby's Diner has special meaning to me. It was the place that me and my parents would bring my grandparents to when we wanted a really good dinner. Everyone liked the food and service and the chance to get out of town. Even though our group was big, and we couldn't sit in the actual diner, just the idea that we all were eating in Gibby's Diner was good enough for me.

One of our favorite items to order were the pork chops. The pork chops have two things going for them. They're a good cut of pork and unlike other places that only give you one or two pork chops, at Gibby's you got three pork chops with your meal. For dinner I often chose this meal, but all their meals with meat were a good choice because they roasted their own meats. Colleen's Favorite is roast turkey with stuffing, cranberry and bread. Often called a Pilgrim at other places. What makes Gibby's variation so special is the home made bread that they used and the thick slices of turkey. No deli slices here. These were slices of turkey carved with a knife. When Gordon Tindall was running the Red Rose Diner in Towanda, I would occasionally order the sandwich and take half of it to Gordon, or bring him an extra sandwich to go.

In the past, many of Gibby's customers were travelers on Route 7. But since the road has been bypassed by an Interstate and the area has nudged more residential, many more locals have come to call the diner a home away from home. The employees really take care of their customers, and the cook will even put a smiley face on the pancakes when they know it is going to a child.

## Alexis Diner

294 N Greenbush Road

Troy, New York

518-286-2603

The newest diner on this list. The owners come from families that have been in the diner business for a good number of years. Lunch is the go to meal with all the offices in the vicinity, and the owners have a lunch menu to meet their customer's needs.





The Alexis Diner has been serving the Capital District for over 20 years, but it is the youngest diner on this list. At one time diners were meant to be replaced with a larger diner every ten or so years, but once a diner gets so big that becomes impractical. Fortunately, so many diners have not been replaced. Some have been enlarged a number of times, like Gibby's Diner, but others, like the Alexis Diner, were built big and have little need to be enlarged.

The Alexis Diner, from the outside, seems like a well oiled machine. Good ownership, good employees, a good menu which takes advantage of its location in a suburban town where there are a lot of offices nearby. With the office workers making up a good number of the customers, during the week, lunch time is the busiest meal of the day. And the diner has done an excellent job of crafting a menu with a good number of fresh specials each day of the week so that if you do not want to order the same item each day, you got some good options. For example, recently they had Mexican peppers or broccoli and cheese topped with a garlic cream sauce or a freshly made chicken pot pie as lunch specials.

Besides the lunch specials, the menu is your typical Greek diner menu with roughly 300 choices. For example, the breakfast menu takes up two full pages. A lot of that are your typical Greek diner options where you can get two pancakes with five additional options, but then they also have over a dozen three egg omelettes.

The Alexis Diner has a short history, but Alexi Lekkas and his wife Betty do have a history in the diner business. Betty's parents ran the Colonie Diner from



1969 to 1992 and for a short time, Alexi worked at the same diner.

Alexi's Diner was built in 1999 by the DeRaffele Company of New Rochelle, New York. Typical to larger diners, one section of the diner is all dining room, with booths around the outside, and tables on the inside. The other side is more traditional older diner. A counter closest to the kitchen followed by rows of two and four seat booths beyond that. In the middle, towards the doors, is the cashier area and some of the desserts that customers can order, if by some strange chance, they actually have any room left in their stomach after their meal. The exterior of Alexi's Diner is called Retro. DeRaffele exaggerated the style of older diners with large windows, and extra chrome above the windows so as to cover the roof where HVAC machinery typically is located. The foyer is also exaggerated, but is not as large as other retro diners.

Gibby's Diner has also been in the same family for its entire existence. Gibby Wolfe opened up this Mountain View diner in 1953. Gibby has passed the spatula on to his son-in-law and daughter Glen & Colleen Glindmyer. In 1953, this part of Route 7 west of Schenectady was not very well traveled, so Gibby did not feel like a large diner was worth the gamble. The original diner had five booths and two smaller counters. With Gibby's home cooking, the "gamble" paid off and Wolfe actually needed to expand three times over the years.

The interior of the diner part of Gibby's Diner is still in impeccable shape. The counter is a curved counter, which is unique. The green tones and stainless steel still shine and sparkle. The exterior is still original and is slightly obscured by metal awnings. The roof sports a nice compact neon sign.

## **One other thing: Apple Orchards & Ice Cream**

<https://www.orangeippin.com/>

According to Orangeippin.com, New York state has the highest number of apple orchards of any state in the country. And to be honest, you can and should find apple orchards when you're traveling. I even hesitate to name any because so many are good choices, but a drive south on US Route 9 into Columbia County will bring you to a famous orchard and roadside stand, Golden Harvest Farms and Samascott Orchards is a little south of here as well.

Ice cream is also available anywhere. I always look for places that make their own. A few of my favorites are Wemple & Edicks, a 40 minute drive north of Gibby's in Sammonsville. Not too far from Alexis Diner is Moxie's Ice Cream in Wyantskill, a place that makes six different varieties of vanilla. You could take a nice drive north to the Battenkill Creamery in Salem as well.



## Dan's Diner

1005 State Route 203

Chatham, New York

518-392-3267

Dan Rundell spent roughly ten years restoring this 1920s barrel roof O'Mahony diner back to its original appearance. The finished product is worth seeing for anyone who appreciates diners, history or just meticulous work. This diner is museum worthy.





Dan Rundell, the owner and restorer of the diner, currently has his family running the diner. He tried leasing it out, but things just never worked out perfectly. The small quarters and isolated location do not help things with prospective leasees. It proved too difficult of a challenge to make a small diner work in an isolated location. the majority of the small diners in this book are located in places where they get enough foot and car traffic to allow for enough turnover to make a good living for the owners. But at Dan's Diner in Spencertown, there is no foot traffic, and even though they are on a state road, very few people except for the locals take the road.

So for the time being, the Rundells keep the place going. Dan's Diner is open for breakfast and lunch. They have a limited regular menu and throw up an assortment of specials for breakfast or lunch. Sometimes they may have apple fritter french toast or a specially topped hamburger for a lunch special.

All of the cooking is done in the diner, so it is a special job of small diners that you get to watch your meal being cooked right in front of you. But, at the same time, the lack of storage space constrains the menu. Fortunately, the food that is served is tried and true. The Rundells do a good job keeping the place humming and offering their customers some good food.

Dan's Diner is a 1920s O'Mahony diner and spent a good number of years in Guilford and Durham, Connecticut. In 1990, the diner had a fire and never reopened. Dan Rundell, a mason by trade bought the diner in 1993 when the diner became available. He saw the diner listed for sale in a Hemmings Motor News. With his background, Dan thought he could seize the opportunity of restoring a diner of this style. But Dan didn't open the diner back up for business right away. He took roughly ten years to restore the diner practically to the way it looked when it came out of the factory in New Jersey.

Being a mason by trade, Dan knew that he could really do a perfect job on the intricate tile work on the floor and the lower walls. The walls used subway tile, but the floors used tiny tiles that were once prevalent all over cities. Dan used pieces off of two other diners that were not really salvagable as diners themselves. These two diners were the Turback Diner(#392) of Ithaca, New York and the Silver Diner(#254) of Whitehall, New York. Dan cleaned each piece of tile before putting them back together into the appropriate place.

In the 1920s and even earlier, diners and lunch wagons were known for have frosted glass on their windows. O'Mahony, for a number of years, was known for forcing the design of curtains on their windows. The "curtains" would give the place an air of elegance. Another upscale extra that O'Mahony used was gold leaf detail on the ceiling. So when you get inside the diner look up and notice that Dan had this restored to like new! Everything you see in the diner is the way it would have been when it came out of the factory, from the stools with wood tops, there were no cushions on the older diners, and the marble counter.

### **One other thing: Taconic Parkway**

This is a different type of One Other Thing. Either when you leave or when you come, travel the Taconic Parkway. The parkway was designed to take advantage of the local scenery and offer an alternative road to get out of metropolitan New York City. Besides the scenery on the side of the road, and in view at rest stops, you can even visit the Franklin Roosevelt State Park, just off the parkway.

Of interest to fans of diners are the Martindale Cheif Diner at the exit for NY Route 23 and then a little south at the exit for NY Rt 82 is the West Taghkanic Diner. Both of these diners are architectural gems. Farther south, a few miles west of the parkway is the Elizaville Diner, another diner worthy of its own trip. So if you can drive or walk around for a few hours after visiting Dan's Diner, one of these three diners would be worth a second stop before heading on to home, or some other destination.

## Palace Diner

62 South Main Street

Gloversville, New York

518-725-9056

One of my favorite diners. This is the type of place that every community used to have. A true family run diner that serves its customers real food. The customers are there for the food and because of the ownership, but you can use the diner as an excuse to visit.



The Gloversville Palace is easily in my top five favorite diners. Architecturally it is an interesting diner that has been remodeled once, but really, what makes this place as great as it is, at least to me, are the owners. The Sena family are the heart and soul of the diner. Besides someone to do the dishes and a couple of waitresses, this is the staff at the diner, a tight knit group of employees who all make the regulars feel like family.

The original diner was 36 feet long by 7.5 feet wide, room for only a counter. In 1932 the front wall was taken out and an addition built on to the rest of the diner so that five more tables could be added for more seating. In 1951 the diner was given its only major overhaul. Much of the wood paneling was covered with plastic, which was a newish product of the time. You can still see the original wood in a few places if you look around the plastic.

All of the breakfast items are cooked on the grill behind the counter. The menu includes all your typical breakfast items for a smaller diner. For lunch, the Senas make a number of specials, the same specials for each day of the week. These are made in the kitchen out back and brought to the warming cabinet or the steam table in the diner. This is how all diners used to do it back in the day.



## Northampton Diner

1205 State Hwy 30

Northville, New York

518-863-3892

Once you enter the non descript building, you are face to face with a gorgeous O'Mahony diner from the very late 1930s.





In almost any small diner today, most of the menu, especially the breakfasts, are cooked on the grill out front. At the Northampton Diner, Darlene is typically at the grill and Chrissy usually serves the customers. They often have one or two other people helping them out during the day, maybe doing dishes or some of the prep work.

In "Diners of the Capital District" by Michael Engle (that's me) Chrissy gave a quote, "Everyone becomes family. It's our job to make everybody feel comfortable. We even let customers get their own coffee if they like." To which she jokingly added, "And some customers we

make get their own." Lest you think she is serious, she later added, "It is a lot of hard work, but so very worth it."

The original fridge is located on the left side of the diner and is still in use. It is used to store items that they need to get to quickly, like the macaroni salad, Angie's famous cole slaw or anything that needs to go on the grill. Most of the menu items are cooked out front, but a few of the lunch specials are cooked out back and then handed to the cook out front through a small window.

Unlike some places that stop serving breakfast at 11 am, the Northampton diner serves breakfast anytime they are open. Some of the more popular items include the homemade sausage gravy and chipped beef. The country omelet with sausage and home fries inside and a scoop of sausage gravy on top is also a popular choice. For children, or if you are a child at heart, they will put a smiley face on top of your pancakes. Their fish fries on Friday are quite popular as well and they make all of their soups, chili and cold salads fresh every day.



The Gloversville Palace Diner is a 1923 O'Mahony diner. When Albert Main bought the diner, the local paper advertised that the diner was, "equipped with three electric fans, electric lights and a special electric toaster which is guaranteed to produce toast buttered and ready to be eaten in one minute." In 1937, he sold the diner to his 21 year old nephew Carleton Clute. Clute ran the diner until 1972 when he sold it to long time employee Tony Sena Sr. Sena ran the diner with his wife Jackie and brought in his sons Ricky & Tony Jr. Tony Sr. has since passed away, but the rest of the family are still running the diner today.

Gloversville, being a factory town, used to have a number of diners, but the Palace is the last diner standing.

The Northampton Diner is a 1938 O'Mahony diner. The diner started out on South Street in Glens Falls and stayed there until 1958 when it needed to be moved for a new building on the diner's site. Max Adelman paid \$8,000 for the diner and moved it to Northville where he ran the diner as more of a coffee house. In 1965 the diner was moved to its current location. After a number of owners Bunny Sherman ran the diner for ten years as the Dun Dozin Diner up until 1988. It was in that year that Harold and Donna Morehouse found the diner. They walked in one day, knowing that they wanted a place to sell ice cream, and seeing the diner for sale, so they bought the place. Customers still wanted food, so finally they gave in and opened up for food and also ice cream. Today, their daughters Chrissy & Darlene have taken over operation of the diner.

**One other thing:** Adirondack Park

<https://visitadirondacks.com/>

Most tourists who enter the Adirondack Park do so via I-87, The Northway. But the seasoned visitors, who are typically spending more than one night in the park, go via NY Route 30 up through Amsterdam, Johnstown and Gloversville. These visitors go to many of the campgrounds dotted over the southern Adirondacks.

But this doesn't mean you have to just go camping. A trip up NY Route 30 will take you to places like the Museum at Blue Mountain Lake. From here you can head in any direction. West to Old Forge or north to Tupper Lake. From here you can head into Saranac Lake from the back side. But nothing says you can't find a lake or a trail before getting there and discover some natural reason the enjoy your trip to the Adirondacks.

## Gibby's Diner

10040 Duanesburg Rd

Delanson

New York

Date:

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## Alexis Diner

294 N Greenbush Rd

Troy

New York

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_



## Dan's Diner

1005 NY Rt 203

Chatham

New York

Date:

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## Gloversville Palace Diner

62 South Main St

Gloversville

New York

Date:

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## Northampton Diner

1205 NY Rt 30

Northville

New York

Date:

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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

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②	
③	
④	

## Historic Village Diner

7550 North Broadway

Red Hook, New York

845-748-6232

A classic Silk City diner that serves good food. The Village Diner went from serving the traveling public on a heavily traveled road, to now serving a local clientele.





A drive to the Historic Village Diner is almost always enjoyable. When you are coming from the north like I do, you pass through picturesque Columbia County before hitting the northern part of Dutchess County. The diner is a stalwart from earlier times, before Red Hook became a trendy destination for metropolitan residents. The diner does an excellent job of bringing the long time locals, the visitors and the Bard College students together.

The first thing you notice is a slightly longer than usual Silk City diner. Note the outside. The green and yellow porcelain enamel strip on the front of the diner, on the far left, does not seem straight when compared to the rest of the diner. And there is good reason. The stainless from the end of the original diner was taken off, and the diner was expanded for more dining space. Then the end stainless was placed on the new extension to make an almost perfect match. Almost. This quirk is neat, but it is not as neat as the experience inside the diner. The current owners, Sam and Arleen Harkins, have done a marvelous job of highlighting the diner experience and celebrating it.

The menu is a mix of traditional diner food and some new items like, Grilled Chicken over a garden salad with fresh peaches and pecans. The current owners are not afraid to try new things while still keeping the items that are tried and true.

On January 7, 1988, the Historic Village Diner was placed on National Register of Historic Places. A move which the author wishes would happen for practically every diner in this book.

The 1951 Silk City diner has a serial number of 5113. This means it was the 13th diner built by the company in 1951. Even though a Silk City diner was the low end of the diner scale of the time, the craftsmanship is still superior to anything that is being made today.

Why does it say “Halfway Diner” on the front of the diner when it is called the Historic Village Diner? Is Red Hook halfway between two places? Well, the diner started out in Rhinebeck which is halfway between Albany and New York City on the main road between the two cities at the time. A year later, Bert Coons, the owner, moved the diner to a location on Route 199. By 1957, Coons would move the diner to Red Hook. The opening of the Taconic Parkway north of the diner’s location funneled traffic away from Rhinebeck. The opening of the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge would bring some traffic back to the westgern side of the county where Red Hook is located. Bert Coons would shortly place diners on the Taconic Parkway at the junctions with Route 82 and 23 as the road progressed north. With his attention moving north, he would rent out the diner in Red Hook.

The diner itself is your typical Silk City diner and it is still in very good shape. Much of the exterior and interior is original. From the tile floor and walls, to the ceiling and other highlights all around the diner. One thing that has changed, is that the counter on the left side of the diner has been removed and replaced with a salad bar.

**One other thing:** Culinary Institute of America

<https://www.ciachef.edu/cia-new-york/>

Although the Culinary Institute of America is a legitimate college where one can get a food related degree, there are still things for a visitor to see and experience. At one time there was a functioning Mountain View diner that was used as part of a number of courses directed towards the quick pace of a diner and lunch counters. Those classes were dropped, but the diner still exists as part of the security offices on campus in Hyde Park. But there are still four restaurants that you can rese4rve a seat in including The Apple Pie Bakery Café, if you are full after stopping at the Historic Village Diner. If you wanted to stay in the area for a few days or a week, there are hands on cooking classes or boot camps available for people looking to bring their culinary skills up a step.



## Eddie's Paramount Diner

104 West Dominic Street

Rome, New York

315-336-9581

Eddie's Paramount Diner is a tried and true old school diner. Specials are still made in house and have stayed the same over the years. Rome has seen better days, and every other diner in town is gone, but Eddie's survives as a testament to what it has to offer. These are the types of diners that we really need to patronize more often.





The commercial downtown section of Rome is split up into two sections. Much of original downtown Rome was demolished to make way for parking, newer buildings or Fort Stanwix. Fort Stanwix is a reconstruction of the old fort that also took out part of Rome's main commercial district. Four diners left Rome between 1957 and the 1970s. That left Eddie's Paramount Diner, originally called Ottaway's Diner as the only diner in Rome.

Fortunately, Eddie's Paramount Diner has become a staple of Rome. Customers for years have depended on a place to get a real breakfast cooked in front of you on the grill behind the counter, and a place for lunch and dinner that have a good and dependable menu with not too much but not too little, just the right amount of offerings. Include in this that during the week Eddie's Paramount Diner has a different daily special each day. As of last year their specials were: Monday - meatloaf, Tuesday - pork dinner, Wednesday - turkey dinner, Thursday - roast beef and Friday - haddock and mac & cheese. That roast beef on Thursday? It is a 75-pound steamship roast that is carved in the diner every Thursday. Their pies are also made in house and get rave reviews.

Edward Long Jr is quoted saying, "If you love what you're doing then it's not work." And the loyalty of the customers and even the waitstaff, many who have been with the diner for more than 30 years. Eddie's Paramount Diner is all about serving its customers simple but good food, cooked in house as much as possible.

Eddie's Paramount Diner is a 1941 O'Mahony diner. As I said in "Diners of New York," it is interesting to compare the changes in style of Eddie's to the Northampton Diner which was built in 1938. While the Northampton has a lot more wood on the inside, Eddie's has more chrome and Formica in the ceiling and upper wall areas. Under the counter, the tile work on Eddie's is a little more plain than on older O'Mahony diners. Eddie's tile work is just two colors of blue, with no third color stripe. And O'Mahony also changed up their long used floor tile. I'm sure the people in charge of O'Mahony thought it was time for a change, but to me, I would have loved to see the same tile inside of Eddie's Paramount Diner.

The exterior of Eddie's is porcelain enamel. Although the diner does show its age and sports a new roof line, you can still see the stylings of the exterior of the diner. Over the years, the interior has hardly been touched by remodelings. Unlike the other slightly older O'Mahony diners in this book, the area above and behind the counter in Eddie's Paramount Diner has some nice stainless steel work. So many diners after this time would also use stainless steel in this area and not just in the cooking areas which made cleaning up easier. Stainless steel would soon become a popular material when it came to design beyond function.

The diner was originally purchased by Charles Ottaway in 1941 to replace an older diner on the property. Ray McAllister bought the diner around 1949 and sold out to Michael Rossi & Salvidore Ferrari shortly afterwards. They ran the diner until 1968 when they sold the diner to the Edward Long Sr.. Today their son Edward Jr. has taken over the day to day operation of the diner.

**One other thing:** Various Items.

I do not have one single thing for Rome. One of the things that I do like to do in Rome besides the diner is stopping at a little neighborhood Italian store called Rocco Gualtieri's Italian Market. It is a continuation of an old time Rome institution. It is not a big store, but it is a step back in time. I especially like the sharp provolone cheese that they cut for you, by hand.

Going in another direction, the Black River Canal used to terminate in Rome. Today, you can bikeride the towpath or kayak the Forestport Feeder Canal north of Rome and see a few of the old locks in various locations. The Feeder goes from Boonville to Forestport. If you continue on NY Rt 12 west out of Boonville towards Watertown, you can see a few of the old locks, including a set of them in a small park between today's road.

## Morey's Diner

119 Phelps Street

Oneida, New York

No phone

Come for the history. Come to meet Lynn Morey who single handedly saved this diner from the scrap heap. Morey's and the Port Henry Diner are two must stops for fans of the older diners.





I am very biased when it comes to Morey's Diner. Many people would not include this diner on their list of favorite diners that were based on both food and appearance. I don't care. I am including it for how important of a deed I believe that Lynn Morey did when he saved the diner. In my book, Lynn is right up there with the likes of Gordon Tindall and Dan Rundell.

Morey's Diner is Ward & Dickinson diner #215. The diner came to Oneida around 1930 and was placed on Main Street. The diner went through a number of owners before Reynold Ido ran the diner from December 29, 1947 to 1972 and moved the diner to its current location on Phelps Street on Sunday, March 22, 1953. By 1989 prospects were looking grim for the diner. The diner's roof leaked profusely. Thankfully Lynn Morey, an Oneida police sergeant at the time came into the picture. Morey bought the diner and spent the next eight years fixing it up to the point where he could open the diner to the public.

Fortunately the diner is very original inside. The original booths, stools and even the original pie case is still in the diner. Morey's is a living museum for diner fans, but for many people in Oneida, Morey's is more of a hangout joint. It is a place to keep in touch with friends, Morey's is a necessary part of Oneida.

The food at Morey's is secondary. They serve breakfast only and menu items are very simple.





# Danny's Diner

151 Main Street

Binghamton, New York

607-724-9873

Good memories in a low key diner. Danny's Diner is nothing flashy. There is no intention for it to be flashy. It's just a dependable local diner that mostly caters to its dedicated clientele.





Danny's Diner is a diner I frequented when I first got interested in diners. Around the same time, I had taken a job in the southern tier of New York state. I would go to Danny's Diner almost every week for a dinner before playing hockey.

Besides being a diner, the next thing I noticed were the plastic Melamine plates that the diner uses. The only other diner I know that uses them is the Gloversville Palace Diner.

Danny's states that nothing is priced over \$9. Two things probably account for these affordable prices. The diner has been in the same ownership for quite a number of years, and the owner knows his customers very well. Danny's is very much a community diner located on the main drag between Binghamton and Johnson City. There are a number of businesses on Route 17C here, but once you get off of the main street, it is urban/residential.

Danny's Diner offers specials each day of the week. They pride themselves in good chicken and biscuits and also offer other specials like Salisbury steak, stuffed peppers or lasagna, all made at the diner.

The diner still has a lot of its original shape. The original panels are still on the exterior, but a mansard roof has been added to it similar to the Littleton Diner. The interior has those cafeteria like seating that I mentioned once being in the two Buffalo area diners. In this diner, they are covered with wood laminate. The counter goes half way down the diner, with all booths at the other end of the diner.



## Skylark Diner

248 Vestal Pkwy East

Vestal, New York

607-785-9795

The Skylark Diner is aa diner that just gets things right. 24 hours like the diners of the past. Day after day, night after night, it's just the all the little things, that they get right.





The Skylark Diner has been in the same family since it opened in the 1950s. When the Skylark Diner was built, it was located on a four lane road that was known as Route 17, a major highway route from New York City to Chautauqua County and then easily further west on other roads. The road from Binghamton westwards through Vestal was upgraded to four lanes some time before the Skylark Diner was put on its location. So when Orval and Gladys Stevens decided to buy a second diner and place it in Vestal, they knew that they would be aiming for a good tourist trade on a main highway. The push for the tourist and traveler trade was highlighted when a family member put up a hotel behind the diner property a few years later.

But it was not too long before Route 17 was moved to a limited access four lane highway took away most of the traffic. Fortunately local patrons picked up the lost trade and have kept the Skylark Diner humming ever since.

In 1961, the Stevens added a back dining room and ran it as a bar until 1984 when they closed down the bar, turned into a dining room and changed the hours of the diner to 24 hours a day. As is true for most 24 hour restaurants, the restaurant gives you enough options for all three meals. Every day, they have a number of daily specials, some unique to the day of the week, and others which are normally on the menu anyways. The breakfast menu has all of your expected items like eggs, pancakes, omelets. Lunch is just as dependable, but one thing that might catch the eye of out of towners is the chicken spiedie. Spiedies are a Southern Tier thing. Marinated chunks of chicken are cooked up and at the Skylark Diner, you can get them in either a sub or a salad.

Danny's Diner is a Sterling Diner. It was the 6th diner built in 1939 by the J. B. Judkins Company. The diner was originally on Front Street, closer to downtown and was known as the A& L Sterling Diner, named after the owners, Whitney Allen & E.W. Lawson. The diner was sold by Anthony Tamborelli. Tamborelli was a salesman for Sterling, all while running four Sterlings of his own in Rochester. The Stevens' (from the Skylark) first diner was a Sterling from neighboring Johnson City. Dilwin & Carrie Walden ran the diner from 1955 to 1965 and moved it to 151 Main Street, a location that had a diner from 1937 to 1961. They ran the diner until 1969 until the current operator took over, Daniel Giannicchi. Daniel and or his then wife Pam would run the diner up to now, with Daniel currently the operator.

The Skylark is a 1956 O'Mahony diner. It has been run by the Stevens family since the beginning. In 1961, the diner was bricked over on the outside. This seems rather quick for a diner to be covered over, but the Stevens say the metal was tarnishing. Right about this time, O'Mahony was about to go out of business due to overextending their business by attempting to open a plant in St. Louis a couple of years earlier. So they were probably cutting corners.

As all the cooking in this diner is done in the back kitchen, the area behind the counter is all for storage of items for wait-staff. And there are no stainless steel panels along the wall. By 1956, O'Mahony was trying small tile. From a historical standpoint, I'm not sure if it was because styles were changing (as they were) or if O'Mahony was trying to save some money.

Today, grandson Greg operates the diner, which he has been doing since 2002.

### **One other thing: Carousels**

<http://www.binghamton-ny.gov/carousels>

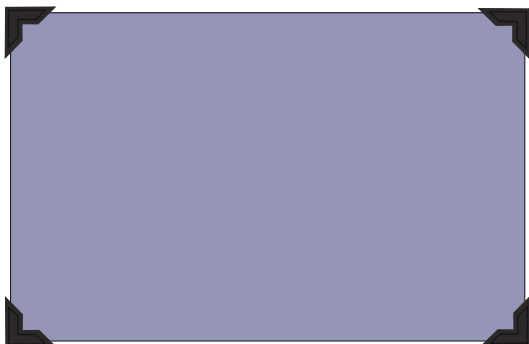
"Between 1919 and 1934, George F. Johnson (1857 – 1948), shoe manufacturer and great benefactor, donated six beautiful carousels to our local parks." All six of the carousels are on the National Register of Historic Places and represent six of the roughly 150 wood-carved carousels remaining in the United States or Canada. One of the carousels is at Ross Park, also home to Binghamton's Zoo. The carousel in Recreation Park was the inspiration of an episode of the Twilight Zone, as creator Rod Serling grew up in Binghamton. The largest of the six sits in C. Fred Johnson Park in nearby Johnson City, while another is located in George W. Johnson in Endicott. West Endicott Park and Highland Park in Endwell round out the carousels.

## Historic Village Diner

7550 N Broadway  
Red Hook  
New York

Date:

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## Eddie's Paramount Diner

414 W Dominick St  
Rome  
New York

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

## Morey's Diner

Phelps St  
Oneida  
New York

Date:



## Danny's Diner

151 Main St  
Binghamton  
New York

Date:



# Skylark Diner

248 Vestal Pkwy E  
Vestal  
New York  
Date:



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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

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②	
③	
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## Modern Diner

73 North Main Street

Wellsville, New York

585-593-9842

Sentimental favorite of mine. Nothing is left of the original diner, so some people would question the inclusion, but I always enjoy my trips to the Modern that happen all too infrequent.







The Modern Diner is a sentimental favorite of mine. When I first started to travel out to Michigan, I would take the Southern Tier Expressway instead of the New York State Thruway to save money on tolls. But I quickly found that I preferred the uniqueness of this route compared to the monotony of the Thruway. One thing I would like to do is to take NY Route 417 from Corning to Olean. This was the old Route 17 and is a more enjoyable drive that only adds an extra 30 minutes to my total trip. I soon found two good restaurants in Wellsville: Texas Hots and Modern Diner. Gordon Tindall is a huge fan of the hot dogs at the Texas Hots and while that is a good place, once I found out that the Modern Diner was originally an authentic Ward & Dickinson diner, and I enjoyed the food at both places anyways, I was sold on the Modern. Over the years it has become my favorite lunch stop for the first day of travels west.

Some of their daily specials include the western New York favorite, fish fry Friday, Lasagna on Saturday and Goulash on Tuesday. Besides the specials, the Modern has your typical small town diner menu. For breakfast they have your omelets, hot cakes and other typical menu items. Then for lunch they serve burgers. My friend Dean Smith who owned the Penn Yan Diner for a short time is a big fan of the Modern's burgers. They also serve hot turkey and hot roast beef sandwiches. Then for dinner, besides the specials of the day, they have items like baked ham, liver and onions and grilled pork chops.

The Modern Diner started out as a Ward & Dickinson diner and was completely remodeled by taking the walls away and expanding the restaurant into what you see today. In the back, you can see pictures of some of the process of these alterations.

Above the counter is a list of all of the owners of the Modern Diner, starting in 1935. While doing research one day in nearby Le Roy, I found in an old newspaper that a diner was being moved from Le Roy to Wellsville. Turns out that the Modern Diner spent a couple of years in Le Roy before coming to Wellsville. Dorothy Legg ran the diner in Le Roy for two years. She brought the diner to a town that already had another Ward & Dickinson diner. Ironically, both diners would leave Le Roy around the same time frame. Legg sold the diner to Gerald Mead and Walter Bird who took the diner to Wellsville and opened it up on July 25, 1933. Raymond Moore took over not too long later followed by Dorothy Elliot & Homer, Mom Hardy and Woody Davis in 1946, Woody & Bea Davis took over in 1956, Gin-Milo Moland in 1969, Dot Moland and Larry Murphy in 1979, Joyce and Larry Arbogast in 1992, Jon Ebeling and Don Stevens in 2005 and in 2008 Pat and Cheryl Carlin took over and continue through today.

A second neat item above the counter is a list of how many miles it is to a number of locations in New York and Pennsylvania. I wouldn't doubt that there are over a hundred different locations listed. Someone even had the owners write in an Ohio location not too long ago.

The diner has a counter and a number of booths along the wall opposite the counter. There are a few more booths in front and one more in the small extension by the current bathroom. Be warned though, the bathrooms a very tight.

**One other thing:** NY Route 417 (Old Route 17)

I am a huge fan of bypassed roads. I really like wide open four lane roads without a lot of traffic. But I also like the former two lane highways like NY Route 417. At one time this road was part of a road meant to rival US Route 20 to the north and the Lincoln Highway to the south as the preferred way to travel by car from New York City to places like Cleveland or Chicago. Today, there are limited access roads that bypass much of old Route 17, but traveling the road can take you into small villages and past some nice businesses. In Woodhull, Golden Age Cheese sells some mighty tasty cheese. In Jasper, you will pass a former gas station housed in a Tepee. In Portville, Red & Trudy's sells a loose meat sandwich that I will often enjoy. Whenever I am not rushed, I always prefer driving on roads that take you from the open road for a time and into a small village from time to time.

## Penn Yan Diner

131 East Elm Street

Penn Yan, New York

315-536-6004

Last\* of its kind. An old wooden diner from the Richardson Dining Car Company. The current owners have brought the diner back to life with strong service and good food. This is a must visit for any true diner historian.





In most worlds Connie's Diner in Waterloo would be in this book. But with it so close to the Penn Yan Diner, my love for the small diners built on the shores of Lake Erie will always win. Connie's Diner in Waterloo is a diner built in 1965, probably by either DeRaffele or Manno. Connie's is a great example of a mix of exaggerated modern and the soon to be environmental style, while the Penn Yan Diner is a fantastic example of when diners were called lunch cars.

Not much has changed at the Penn Yan Diner. There was a wall removed on the left end so that a new dining room could be added. The four stools along the other far end wall were removed for more kitchen space, new necessary equipment was added a few years ago, but other than that the diner is a living history museum.

Carrie & Sean Ahearn have a pretty straightforward menu. Their breakfasts are full of the dependable diner favorites along with a few extras here and there. Their biscuits and sausage gravy are good with a good dose of Jimmie Dean sausage. On the web-site NYup.com they were voted best pancakes, best home-fries and best atmosphere. You can get their pancakes either Sweetcream or Birkett Mills Buckwheat. Birkett Mills is the local maker of buckwheat products, which is one of the brands of buckwheat flour that I use at home.

Lunch consists of the regular items, like hamburgers, grilled cheese or deli sandwiches. They boast that they make their own hamburgers buns which I wish most other places would do.

\* We included an asterisk because recently I re-discovered a Richardson built diner. Well, sort of. A restaurant in Dansville, New York still has the ceiling of its Richardson diner, but every wall has been expanded and there is nothing else left of the diner.

The Richardson Dining Car Company was the first western New York lunch car builder that started a mini boom of diners outside of New England and the Philadelphia - New York City corridor.

The Penn Yan Diner was brought to Penn Yan by the Legters family. For some odd reason the local paper called the diner a "Galion" lunch car. No one has been able to figure out the reasoning, and except for a couple clues and an article in a neighboring newspaper. Richardson did a good amount of their business with families local to their factory in Silver Creek, New York. The Legters did not last long, moved back to western New York and the diner was resold to Carroll Bond. Bond had to deal with a couple of legal issues with the former owners and the builder and also had to deal with a fire in the kitchen located in the basement that fortunately did not do a lot of damage to the diner itself.

Under Odell Jones the diner was enlarged with an additional dining room on the left side of the diner. Over the years the diner had a number of owners until Dean Smith took over. First thing Dean found out, from code enforcement, was that the diner was out of code and needed some expensive upgrades. Now how could that have happened? Fortunately Dean came through and upgraded the diner. Dean was not able to make a go of it and was fortunate to find excellent new owners who have turned the corner and now run a really good business.

**One other thing:** Mac's Drive In and the Finger Lakes

Mac's is on Facebook & <https://www.fingerlakes.org/>

Save room for dessert. Specifically a root beer float. Mac's Drive In has been on US Route 20 in Waterloo for almost 60 years and is a seasonal favorite for locals and tourists alike. Although they have typical drive in food and a couple extras like pizza and fried chicken, I'll assume you ate at the diner. Mac's was originally a Richardson Root Beer stand. (No relation to the diner builder.) They still serve their own root beer and make root beer floats in ice cold glass mugs as well.

All of this in the Finger Lakes. The Finger Lakes were originally known for the scenery and number of grape vineyards that love the micro-climate produced by the lakes. There are even limos that you can rent to take you from vineyard to vineyard. But now there is a lot more to see. Check out the web-site above for more suggestions.

## Swan Street Diner

700 Swan Street

Buffalo, New York

716-768-1823

The former Newark Diner of Newark, New York lucked out when it was bought and moved to the Larkinville section of Buffalo. The diner was lovingly restored/remodeled. Sensitive updates were made, always with a thought about preserving the history of this great humble diner.







During the previous ownership, the Newark Diner was a neighborhood old school diner. Now that it is the Swan Street Diner, not only does the building have new life, but so does the menu. The menu now leans somewhere between diner food and upscale food. Make no mistakes, it is diner food, but there is a little flair to it! Instead of having your typical packages of jelly, the diner makes their own jam for toast. They also make their own corned beef hash. They use Pleczek bread from a local bakery, Mazurek's, to make their french toast. These little flairs are abound on their menu.

The diner does offer wine, beer and mimosas on their menu and the mimosa are popular for a weekend breakfast, but their lunch time, Monday through Friday are the most popular time for the diner. With the diner being located just outside a number of offices, it is packed with lunch goers looking for a change from the bagged lunch. To the typical soup, salad and burgers, they have kept the lunch menu pretty straight forward. They have added items like buttermilk fried chicken and a jerk avocado sandwich, but everything they have for lunch, they make sure it can be served in quick order to meet the local customer base with limited time for lunch.

The diner is currently open from 7 am to 3 pm which fits in well with the other neighborhood restaurants who serve the dinner crowd well.



## Smokin Little Diner

4870 Broadway

Depew, New York

716-683-9248

I always enjoyed my trips to the Silk City built diner in Depew over the years, but once the Smoking Little BBQ people took over the diner, they brought the food to a new level. This transition stage Silk City diner is in good hands with the current ownership.





The Smokin Little Diner's menu is the fusion of a diner and a BBQ joint. Some Great BBQ Sauce Company, bought out the diner a number of years ago. They kept the breakfast menu typical of a diner, but for lunch and dinner, the menu leans more towards a barbecue joint, as a vehicle to showcase their meats and their sauces, which are also for sale. You can get their meats as platters: oink(pig), cluck(chicken), moo(beef) along with burgers and hot dogs and a number of dinner choices. On Fridays, they also have a number of fish fries, which are a well known western New York tradition. Their fish choices include perch, beer battered or broiled fish fries.

My favorite dinner item is the pulled pork on top of the mac and cheese. You can pick one of nine house made barbeque sauces to use, including Apple Cinnamon, Bourbon Street or Brandied Cherry as just three of the choices.

The Smokin Little Diner is a 1955 Silk City diner. The diner started out as Robert's Diner in 1955. At the time, this Silk City diner sold for \$42,000 with an extra \$2,900 for the vestibule. Peter Sciolino bought the diner in 1966 and kept the name. His daughter started working at the diner at the age of 12, and even kept on working on at the diner even though her father sold the diner. The diner was doing business as the 50's Diner when I first visited the place in the 1990s.

When I first visited in the 1990s, the exterior had blue horizontal stripes. On the inside, the counter on the right side of the diner was taken out and replaced with generic cafeteria style booths. Other than the booth, most of the rest of the diner is original. There is still a counter on the left side of the diner and booths take up the rest of the

diner. The Some Smokin people have updated the diner a little since they bought it, but everything fits in well. The counter stools have new cushions and the booths were updated. On the outside, the horizontal striped were painted with new colors to match their logo years ago. In 2020 the current ownership did some necessary repair work in the kitchen, the entryway and repaved the parking lot.

The Swan Street Diner is a 1939 Sterling diner and started out on the east side of Newark, New York. While in Newark, the diner has only had three owners. Paul Scolfield brought the diner to Newark, sold it to John Reynolds and finally to Jim McBride, who operated it for 27 years until 2013. I was fortunate enough to visit the diner while the diner was in Newark, a couple of times. The diner had those simple cafeteria style booths similar to what I remember in the Smokin BBQ Diner had when it was the 50's Diner. The diner was showing its age, but it was in original condition. As a diner expert pointed out to me, Sterlings were not built to be perfectly waterproof.

In 2013, the diner purchased by the Larkin Development Group. They hired Steve Harwin to do some restoration, and the restoration was finished up in Buffalo. The work that was done is just breathtaking to see and experience. Everything was either refurbished or rebuilt in the footprint of the original diner's dimensions. The counter was rebuilt, with the glass counter left in place. A true rarity in diners of today. Booths for two people line the counter. These booths fit the place magnificently. One really must experience the effort the Larkin group put in to the restoration.

**One other thing:** Gondola Pasta & Guercio & Sons Inc.

I always have a slew of food coming home with me when I go out to Buffalo. I wish I could safely bring home some of Smokin's pulled pork and mac and cheese, but... I do make up for it with a number of food stops. Top on my list include Gondola Pasta.

Gondola Pasta is a small company that makes their own pasta in Buffalo at 1985 Niagara Street. I always bring home a few bags of their Fettuccine noodles. It is always nice when you find these small local places. I first found their pasta at Guercio & Sons, a small Italian grocery store in the old Italian neighborhood of Buffalo at 250 Grant Street. This place is another must stop for me when in Buffalo and there is always something that catches my eye in the store.

These are not the only foodie type places in Buffalo. Do a little searching on your own, and I am sure you will find some neat places.

## Modern Diner

73 N Main St  
Wellsville  
New York

Date:



## Penn Yan Diner

131 E Elm St  
Penn Yan  
New York

Date:



## Swan Street Diner

700 Swan St  
Buffalo  
New York

Date:

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## Smokin Little Diner

4870 Broadway  
Depew  
New York

Date:

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## Diner

Date:



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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

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②	
③	
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## Lawrence Park Dinor

4019 Main Street

Lawrence Park, Pennsylvania

814-899-4390

This is “dinor” town. “Dinor” was a term for diners in the area from the 1920s which was popularized in the 1940s. Even without the quirky name the Lawrence Park would still be my go to diner when I’m in Erie for hockey games.







Mountain View is the company that is known as sending a number of diners into the mid-west. This are on the south side of Lake Erie once had three Silk City diners. Besides the Lawrence Park Dinor, there were two other Silk City diners in the greater Erie vicinity. One is long gone and the second acts as excess seating for a biker bar.

The Lawrence Park Dinor sits on the edge of the small business district of Lawrence Park, a village set up with many General Electric employees in its day. The Erie area was a big diner town in the 1930s and 1940s, but I believe that the current Lawrence Park Dinor is the one and only diner ever to be located in Lawrence Park. Fortunately with so many other diners around the area, and the Silk City diner being newer than most of the others, it was well received.

The menu is very straightforward. They have your typical breakfast items like pancakes, eggs and bacon and omelets. For lunch, things pick up in variety. They have home made soup just about every day and different lunch specials during the week. From the prior ownership, the Lawrence Park Dinor became famous for their Greek Sauce . The Greek Sauce is based on a Coney Island sauce and is a spicy meat sauce that can be served on a hot dog, french fries, or other items if you ask. If you felt like it, you could even put the Greek Sauce on one of the breakfast menu items. The diner also serves Smith's Hot Dogs, made by Smith's Provisions. Smith's makes sausages, deli meats, bacon and award-winning hams in Erie. For dessert they offer home made pies like Peanut Butter, Blueberry Streusel and Chocolate Cream.

## Russ's Dinor

2902 Buffalo Road

Wesleyville, Pennsylvania

814-898-2750

Similar to the Modern Diner in Wellsville, New York, Russ's Dinor started out as a small diner and today resembles nothing of the sort. Fortunately the diner is under capable ownership and Russ's gives you an old time diner experience.





Russ's Diner is one of those old school places that used to be found in every community: a family run business just goes about its business, confidently, and everyone knows they will be open year after year. Unlike so many towns, let's hope that Russ's Diner doesn't close any time soon.

The menu at Russ's isn't anything elaborate, but what they do make, you can probably expect it to be home made. The pies are said to be home made and excellent. I typically have stopped at Russ's Diner for breakfast, so pie is out of the question for me. I did notice that the diner is one of the few places that still use cup and saucers for coffee. So many places have moved on to larger mugs.

When this diner started out around 1930, Wesleyville was a small village to the east of Erie, a large enough industrial city and just south of Lawrence Park, home of General Electric. Wesleyville already had a diner in town, but being on US Route 20, there was enough business for another diner. There were even three diners in Wesleyville for a time. US Route 20 was the major east west road between Buffalo and Cleveland, so Wesleyville got its fair share of the traveling public. Back then, the diner was listed on a "Map-kin" of the best stops on 20, advertising, "fine meals at economical prices... at all hours." US Route 20 has been long bypassed by Interstate-90, so the hours are more limited nowadays, but the prices are still economical at Russ's Diner.

## Gigi's Diner

344 E Columbus Avenue

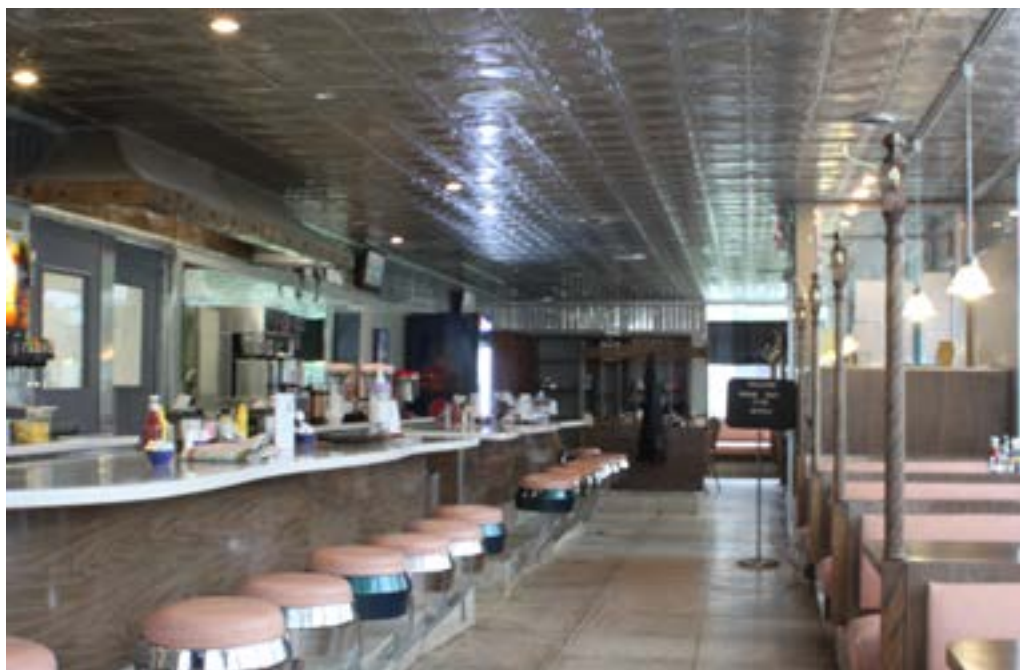
Corry, Pennsylvania

814-664-8646

Gigi's Diner got a second life, as it spent most of its life in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. It was intended to open as a tourist information center but fortunately opened as a diner not that many years ago. It has become a stop of mine when I have the time to skip the Interstates on my travels westward.







Gigi's is on the eastern outskirts of Corry along US Route 6. If you have the time, I would highly recommend traveling the length of US Route 6 through Pennsylvania sometime. It does take more time, but if time is no problem, it is something I think you will enjoy. There are more than a few other diners on US Route 6 that could easily have made this book, but this book has a limit of 55 diners and everything is subjective.

Even though Gigi's was built in 1964, it is one of the newer diners in this book. By the 1960s, the east coast diner manufacturers were moving well away from the stainless steel inside and outside. The chrome that you see on the outside of today's Gigi's Diner was put there by the current ownership. As they were fixing up the diner after the move up from Huntingdon they decided to update the exterior look of the diner.

Gigi's menu is pretty straight forward for a diner. They do offer scrambles and skilletts, which are scrambled eggs mixed with various menu items, omelets and other breakfast favorites. For lunch they offer a number of sandwiches and salads along with hot dogs with a number of toppings. For dinner they have a number of burgers, a couple of Italian favorites like spaghetti and chicken Parmesan and maybe another dozen more dinner menu items. On the specials board, they will have a couple specials for either breakfast, lunch or dinner.

The Lawrence Park Diner is a 1948 Silk City diner purchased by Harold and Irene Curtis. A number of other owners came through the doors until George Gourlias took over in 1991 at age 21. He developed the Greek Sauce and also was the owner when the diner was placed on the

National Register of Historic Places. In 2010, he sold to the current owners Becky & Rick Standley.

The diner is in very good shape. Everything is very original, although they do not use the door on the front of the diner, which allowed them to put an extra booth in its place.

Russ's Diner started out as a Mulholland diner called the Wells Diner in 1929. Chas & Merle Wells ran it until 1939. In 1947 Wendell Russ bought the diner and the diner has been owned by someone in the same bloodline since with Ron & Dianne Russ operating the diner since 1986. Some time in the 1950s, the Mulholland diner was replaced by what you see today, a nondescript building that operates as a diner with a counter and booths. Not much has changed since then, the architecture comes from the 1950s. A nice touch are the photos of the Mulholland diner on the walls.

Gigi's Diner is a 1964 Swingle diner. It started out as Grubb's Diner in Huntingdon, owned by Jerry Grubb and his family. The diner has styles from the exaggerated modern and environmental periods. It originally had a white ceramic pebble facade on the front and the inside was done in American colonial with acoustic panels and false timbers.

Grubb's closed sometime in the 2000s and the Grubb family were hoping someone would take the diner and reuse it. David Sample got the diner and had it moved to Corry where he restored it to his interpretation. It still has the scalloped counter and the wood paneled booths, but the outside got a new makeover.

**One other thing:** American Bakery & Tom Ridge Environmental Center

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/> - Then search Tom Ridge

The Tom Ridge Environmental Center is inside the Presque Isle State Park. As the website states, "is an educational center dedicated to teaching visitors about the unique 3,200 acres of Presque Isle and the many different forms of life that inhabit the peninsula." There is even another diner on the Peninsula.

The American Bakery is a local institution in the old Italian section of Erie. They have a number of goodies that you would expect in any Italian bakery, but the one thing they are best known for are their pepperoni balls. If you are unfamiliar with them, think of a large garlic knot, stuffed with pepperoni.

# Jolly Donut

2815 Milan Road

Sandusky, Ohio

419-626-6071

You can not even tell the place houses an authentic diner inside. But when diner fans go inside, they'll see a nicely preserved diner. Open for breakfast and lunch,







I first experienced the Jolly Donut in the 1990s. On my frequent trip from New York to Detroit, I was often exploring towns along the way. I discovered an old school restaurant in downtown Sandusky and Bacarella's Diner in Erie, Michigan, but it seemed otherwise there was not a lot of roadside food stops.

Then I discovered the Jolly Donut. What looked like a generic brick building housed a mostly original Mountain View diner. Sandusky was often a stop for the end of the day traveling west. If I was going to Detroit, I could make it in one day, but if I was headed farther west, Sandusky was a good stop. I tried Fort Wayne, where Cindy's Diner is located, but it is pushing it, and the motel I was staying at turned into a bad place.

The Jolly Donut is the merge of a diner and a donut shop. I am not a huge donut fan, so I have actually never tried their donuts, but I can tell you about their food. The Jolly Donut's breakfast is dependable. I have never had a bad meal here, but I usually just go with eggs, bacon and toast. All the food is cooked in the kitchen in the back. For lunch their facebook pages states, "burgers, fries, homemade egg and tuna salad, philly cheese steaks, Reuben, and even spaghetti, rigatoni, veal parm, and chicken parm all with our homemade sauce."

## Tin Goose Diner

3515 East State Road

Port Clinton, Ohio

419-732-0236

This is what a 1950s diner would look like in the 1950s. The Tin Goose Diner is simply a work of art that functions as a diner. Visit. Help support the aviation museum all the while enjoying a great diner.





The diner started out in Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania. I only saw the diner once while it was in Jim Thorpe, so when I heard it was moving to Port Clinton, I was really looking forward to stopping. It was along a route that I travel a couple of times a year and knew that I would probably be hitting the region in the evening when the Jolly Donut was closed.

All of their menu items have themed names, often airplane themed. Creamed chipped beef with eggs and potatoes is called the GI Special S.O.S. Platter. Eggs, meat and potatoes is called the Flyboy Special. You can get country fried steak with pepper gravy, two eggs if you order The Rickenbacker. They also have omelettes, hot cakes and french toast.

For lunch and dinner the themed names continue although the soups: Lobster bisque and tomato soup lack those types of names. The Tin Goose offers an assortment of hamburgers and hot sandwiches like The Wichita which is their name for a pork tenderloin sandwich. There are other items on the menu like salads, cold sandwiches, chili and mac and cheese. They even have Lake Erie yellow perch available at market price, which I can personally say was very good. It was cut into thin fillets but still had good fish taste.

With the diner being located at an aviation museum and also at a county airport, you will probably see a couple planes take off and land while you eat.

The Jolly Donut was built by the Mountain View Dining Car Company of Signac, New Jersey. The diner is numbered #414 and was built around 1954. The original name was Miranda's Diner. There is an original terrazzo M in the floor near the front door to signify the M in Miranda. Sometime later, the diner became known as the Sands Diner. Today the diner has a brick exterior.

Sandusky has always been a diner town. It all started with a well known lunch wagon in the 1910s. In the diner era, there were at least four other diners in and around Sandusky besides the Jolly Donut. Jean's Diner was the best known diner, located on the main road through downtown. Jean's started as a used Ward & Dickinson and was replaced by a used O'Mahony diner. There was also a Brill, Dinette Diner and a double trolley car turned into a diner in Sandusky.

The Tin Goose Diner is a 1951 O'Mahony diner. It was originally called Steve's Diner when it was first brought to Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania. Later, it would become the Sunrise Diner, which is the name that it had when it closed down. Steve Harwin was able to obtain the diner. Steve is a diner restorer who typically restores Silk City diners, but he is not afraid to take on any diner that he thinks he can work on. In 2012, The Liberty Aviation Museum purchased the diner from Steve and also had him build an on-site addition that really nicely matches the original diner. All the proceeds from your meal at the Tin Goose Diner go to keeping the diner and the aviation museum functioning, so consider a trip to this diner as your civic duty.

The diner is a work of beauty! Red and Pink highlight the diner with some really nice stainless steel trim.

**One other thing:** Cedar Point and other amusements

<https://www.cedarpoint.com/>

Cedar Point is a well known amusement park on the shores of Lake Erie in Sandusky, Ohio. Cedar Point has a total of 18 roller coasters including one that goes back to 1964. They bill themselves, "The roller coaster capital of the world." They also say that they have an 18 acre water park. They have also added a sports park that hosts a number of youth tournaments. If you like amusement parks, this is probably the place to go in the summer.

In downtown Sandusky, you can find a Merry-Go-Round Museum. Learn about the history of the merry-go-round and even see what is thought to be the only haunted animal carving.

Lawrence Park Dinor

4019 Main St  
Erie  
Pennsylvania

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_



Russ Dinor

2902 Buffalo Rd  
Erie  
Pennsylvania

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_



## Gigi's Diner

344 E Columbus Ave  
Corry  
Pennsylvania  
Date:

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## Jolly Donut

2815 Milan Rd  
Sandusky  
Ohio  
Date:

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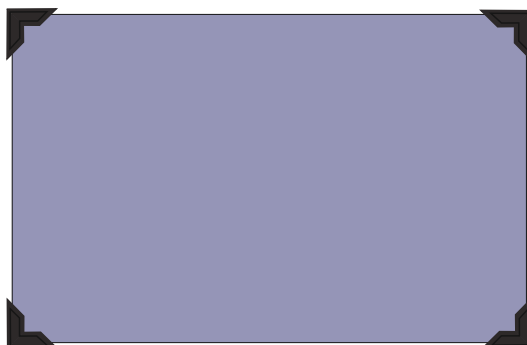


# Tin Goose Diner

3515 E State Rd  
Port Clinton  
Ohio

Date:

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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

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②	
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## Fleetwood Diner

300 South Ashley Street

Ann Arbor, Michigan

734-995-5502

The Fleetwood Diner should be a national treasure. The vibe, the food, the vibe, the food, this diner has it. And who would imagine a diner which such good diner vibes is located in Michigan? Ann Arbor might deem itself hip and trendy, but the Fleetwood is everything real about Ann Arbor. You need to visit.





Every college town should have a place like the Fleetwood Diner. Some people point to Zingerman's Deli as the food place to go to when you're visiting Ann Arbor. And maybe that is ok for the upscale hip trendy people, but for me the real Ann Arbor, hip and trendy place to go to is the Fleetwood Diner. The Fleetwood Diner is a mix of the workingman, the college student and the twenty somethings who hang out at clubs vibe.

The Fleetwood Diner is best known for Hippy Hash. "It's homemade hash browns topped with grilled tomato, green pepper, onion, mushroom and broccoli topped with feta cheese." You can even get the Hippy Hash with meat, with gyro meat, or with tempeh. The Fleetwood Diner headlines the Hippy Hash on their menu, and many people order it the first time they visit. But really, the Hippy Hash is just the beginning of the menu. The Fleetwood also has omelettes and your typical breakfast offerings like french toast or eggs and bacon. On the weekends, the Fleetwood is a popular place for breakfast with everyone, just as diners back east are known for.

The diner is open 24 hours a day, so they offer more than breakfast. Their dinner options are predictable with items like burgers, hamburger steak, pork chops and chicken fingers but they also offer gyro platters. Whatever you order, just make sure you take a trip to Ann Arbor and stop at the Fleetwood Diner.

The Fleetwood Diner started as the Dag-Wood Diner in 1948. It was a kit built by the Dag-Wood Company of Toledo, Ohio. The original owner of the diner, Donald Reid stated that the company went bankrupt during the building of the kit, and he had to find parts on his own to finish the diner. Reid opened the diner on March 17, 1949 and sold it to Robert Brown in 1966. Mark Hodesh bought the diner in 1971 and renamed it the Fleetwood Diner.

The company maybe built six diners and most stayed in the general Toledo - Detroit vicinity. The Betsy Ross Restaurant in Toledo started out as a Dag-Wood and the restaurant best known as Bacarella's Diner in Erie, Michigan is also a Dag-Wood. That building still houses a restaurant, but the diner has been greatly remodeled over the years.

Being a kit, the diner building quite simple. The footprint of the diner is mostly rectangular with an extra bump out of a place to wash dishes out of sight of the customers. When a customer walks into the diner, they are in the small counter area. They can place an order to the right side where the cook can interact with people wish to have a takeout order. The kitchen area is a part of the diner. You get to see your food being cooked, just like diners were originally built. To the left of the counter are a number of tables, all tightly packed in to maximize customer space. The walls and the ceiling are metal panels which, over the years, have been used as a canvas for stickers. You could probably spend a good hour just looking at all the stickers and they actually enhance the essence of the diner.

**One other thing:** Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village

<https://www.thehenryford.org/>

The Henry Ford Museum is a collection started by Henry Ford to document the history of mankind and of Detroit. For roadside and diner fans there are a few things of interest above and beyond the typical museum. In the museum itself, there is a diner. Lamy's Diner was meticulously restored by the museum with immeasurable guidance from Richard Gutman. The museum also has a number of neon signs from Detroit's recent past.

In the attached Greenfield Village, there is a lunch car which is reminiscent of the ones that Henry Ford would go to in Detroit.

Beyond these items, the museum is still a must see if you are interested in history. The scope of the museum makes it one of the best in the country.

## Cindy's Diner

230 West Berry Street

Fort Wayne, Indiana

260-422-1957

Since John Scheele stepped in and restored the diner and the business, Cindy's Diner has become a must see and experience destination for any diner fan. Don't dawdle, make an excuse to visit.





"We serve the whole world, 15 people at a time," is the motto at Cindy's Diner. This really is a diner experience that you need to have. For me, the diner is a full days away, if I haul. My problem is that there are so many other good diners and directions that I can go to, that I don't get to Cindy's Diner enough.

The big item on the menu is the "garbage." Like many other places that have a similar menu item, the "garbage" at Cindy's Diner starts with scrambled eggs and then hash brown potatoes, onions, ham and cheese are all thrown in and served similar to an omelet. The other famous item on the menu at Cindy's Diner are the donuts. Why? The donuts are made in house, in front of your eyes on a machine once used in town at the Murphy's Dime Store. John was able to get a hold of the machine and put it to good use at the diner.

The diner also offers the regular suspects like biscuits and gravy, omelets, corned beef hash and pancakes. For lunch they offer items like hamburgers, grilled sandwiches, french fries, and fried bologna sandwiches. I have seen the fried bologna called a Hoosier favorite, but this menu item is also popular in parts of Ohio as well.

The Valentine diner itself is a boxy affair. The pylon with neon spelling out Cindy's Diner highlights the outside. There are large picture windows behind the 15 stools that all have backs to them and are to the left of the door. The grill is straight ahead of you and the donut machine is to the right. The bathrooms are around the back, in a separate building. Cindy's Diner needs to be seen to be truly appreciated.

Fort Wayne was a respectable diner town for the mid-west. City directory research has found numerous diners over the years, downtown and out of town. The Tiny Tim Diner was another Valentine that used to be in downtown Fort Wayne. There were also number of trolley car diners on the outskirts of town as a number of major travel routes enter and exit the city.

Cindy's Diner is a 1953 Valentine diner that measures 10 ft by 40 ft. With the way Valentine built their diners, I would have to believe that it was two or three pieces, put together on site. Noah Clauss bought the diner for \$6,000 and opened the diner at Clinton @ Jefferson. In 1960 the diner became Paul's Diner and then in 1966 it was known as Paul's Diner and moved to Clay @ Berry. The diner would stay that way until John & Cindy Scheele bought the diner in 1990. John was in construction, and actually thought the diner would be for his wife.

The diner needed some restoration work, and John was up to the task. He must have quickly became attached to the diner because was the one who ended up being at the diner practically every day and operating the place. Around this same time, John decided to have the diner moved to Harrison @ Wayne. Roughly ten years later, there was talk in Fort Wayne about having the diner moved so that the city could develop some land. In 2014, the diner was finally moved one more time to 230 West Berry @ Maiden Lane.

Angie Harder bought the diner in 2016. Angie started at the diner in 1996 as a dishwasher and quickly became a fixture at the diner, becoming as important to the vibe of the diner as John was. As it became more difficult for John to operate the diner due to health issues, Angie stepped up and eventually bought the diner.

**One other thing:** Auburn Cord Duesenberg Car Museum

<https://automobilemuseum.org/>

Similar to another car museum in Michigan, this museum also houses a diner. The Auburn museum houses the former Valentine diner from nearby Angola, Indiana.

The Auburn, Indiana museum is housed in a great building. The building housed the headquarters of the Auburn Automobile Company from 1930 to 1937. On the inside, the first thing that sticks out to me is the design used for the floor. They remind me of terrazzo floors from a diner. The museum tells the story of the car manufacturers who once called Auburn home. Beyond the over 100 cars in the museum, they also offer a number of educational opportunities for school groups.



## Oasis Diner

405 W Main Street

Plainfield, Indiana

317- 837-7777

The diner is simply beautiful to look at, especially at night when the neon is on. The Oasis is one of a small number of diners that came to the mid-west in the 1950s that is still around.







The Oasis Diner is getting quite a reputation from foodies who pray at the altar of the breaded pork tenderloin. If you don't believe me, type in breaded pork tenderloin mid-west into your favorite search engine and you will see lists and recipes. The Oasis Diner's recipe comes from Piercy's original recipe for the most part. But the Oasis Diner is so much more than the breaded pork tenderloin. For example, the diner gets their soda from a local source, using only sugar, instead of high fructose corn syrup. The diner also has their own bakery, like many larger diners back on the east coast. They use brioche bread for their french toast.

The menu at the Oasis Diner has a nice mix of diner classics and what is currently popular at restaurants. The menu can go from biscuits and gravy to a southwest chicken omelet. When it comes to dinner, the Oasis Diner has all the regular diner items, including hamburgers, but they also serve items such as their catfish tacos. The diner part of the establishment is small in width, as it was originally shipped on a rail-car, so the back building holds the majority of the seating. For a diner fan, a seat in the diner part of the restaurant is a necessity. But if the diner is full, even the counter as well, at least there are more seats waiting for you in this additional dining room.

The Oasis Diner was built by the Mountain View Dining Car Company of Signac, New Jersey in 1954. In the early 1950s, Mountain View made a push to get their diners placed in the mid-west. With Indiana the crossroads of the nation, it became a prime location for Mountain View to look. There were a handful of diners in the Indianapolis vicinity and the Oasis is the last Mountain View still operating as a diner in central Indiana. James Canavan and Frank Thurber were the original owners of the Oasis Diner. They located the diner on US Route 40 west of Indianapolis. At the time, it was the main route from Indianapolis to St. Louis.

James bought out Frank and ran the diner into the early 1970s. The diner went through a couple of owners until Raymond Piercy got ill in 2008 and could no longer run the diner. In 2010 Indiana Landmarks listed the Diner on their 10 Most Endangered Indiana Buildings list. Unlike other diners, the Oasis was saved with help from the town of Plainfield. Doug Huff and Don Rector worked tirelessly to move the diner off of its original location and then come up with a plan for the diner. They restored the diner and placed it next to Doug's Dairy Queen store and even added a nice addition that fits the 1950s motif of the diner.

Fans of 1950s diners on the east coast will notice that this diner is a bit more narrow than other diners. Mountain View shipped their diners west by rail, which forced the width of their railroad shipped diners to be narrower than the typical diner of the time.

**One other thing:** US Route 40, the National Road:

<https://visitindiana.com/trip-ideas/26502-travel-the-historic-national-road>

The National Road is the first federally funded road in the United States. It started in Cumberland, Maryland and headed west. Due to funding issues caused by the financial panic of 1837, the road stopped at Vandalia, Illinois. There is much history to see on the road from that time period, but the road was also important when much of the road became known as US Route 40 and people flocked to their cars in the 1920s through the 1950s.

Indiana has taken advantage of that history and even more with their designation of the road as an Indiana Byway. Check out their website for more information.

## Franks Diner

508 58<sup>th</sup> Street

Kenosha, Wisconsin

262-657-1017

An O'Mahony diner from 1925 in Wisconsin? Good food too? Franks has both history and food in one place. It might be tougher to find a more original and old O'Mahony diner than Franks. And the place has been written about in many magazines. This is the real deal.





Franks Diner is as justly famous for the celebrities that have visited the place as they are for the mentions in various publications which they have received over the years. They are really a one of a kind place in the mid-west. Franks Diner is the only original diner in the state of Wisconsin except for Moe's Diner in Osseo. But really, that diner is less than 20 years old, so who can count that. Franks Diner in Kenosha is inching closer and closer to the 100 year mark and will accomplish that feat in 1926.

The diner itself is just a vehicle for the food being served in a diner, and while being housed in such a unique building brings visitors, the food must shine to keep them coming back.

Franks' signature item is their garbage plate. "Start with 3 eggs (Half Plate) or 5 eggs (Full Plate) mixed into a combination of hash browns, green peppers, and onions." Then the customer can add a various number of additions like meats or more veggies. Their old grill inside the diner is typically dedicated to their garbage plates, as so many people choose to order them, especially on weekends.

Besides the garbage plate, Franks has a whole complementary diner menu for breakfast. They serve items like pancakes, french toast, omelets and even have a veggie burrito.

Lunch is more straight forward, but they still offer your typical diner favorites for lunch like turkey club, grilled cheese, hamburgers and homemade chili. The diner even offers some alcoholic options like mimosas, bloody mary and a few bottled beers.

Franks Diner is a 1926 O'Mahony diner. It is far easier to quote the Franks Diner website as they put the history of the diner quite succinctly. "In 1926, there was some real excitement in Downtown Kenosha when six horses pulled Franks Diner to the spot where it stands today. The structure was built by the Jerry O'Mahony company in New Jersey, and shipped to Kenosha on a railroad flatcar. Anthony Franks, who first learned of the unique restaurant opportunity through a magazine article, paid \$7,500 plus \$315 in shipping charges to launch his business. He added a dining room in 1935 and a larger kitchen in the mid 1940s. The Franks family operated the diner until 2001 when it was purchased by Chris Schwartz, Lynn Groleau and Kris Derwae from Don Franks and John Gilmores. Chris and Lynn sold the diner to Julie Rittmiller and Kevin Ervin in 2010."

Even after all these years, the diner is still quite original. When they felt the need to add more space, all they did was build a new dining room on the outside of the front of the long end of the diner, and took out the glass windows, and voila. Extra dining space. For me, the diner is where all the action is located. When I was there, the old main grill was being solely used to cook the various garbage plates.

The interior still has its original tile work. Well, most of it, as some of the small tiles have gone missing over the years. Most of the wood work is still showing in the diner. It is neat to be able to compare this diner to Dan's Diner in Spencertown, New York. Behind the counter, the wood drawers are still being used, and much of the metalwork is still there for you to admire. I hope you get a chance to visit Franks Diner, because this is a great diner to admire. And if they are busy, like they normally are, I hope you're able to get a seat at the counter.

**One other thing:** Lake Geneva

<https://www.visitlakegeneva.com/>

Lake Geneva is a destination location for both people of Chicago and Milwaukee. The City of Lake Geneva has a downtown full of shops catering to tourists on vacation, and over the years, the typical family parks have been built up. The city even has its own vintage diner. Joni's Diner was the former Decoven Diner from Duncannon, Pennsylvania. It now sits off the beaten path alongside a slew of chain restaurants. If you are into walking, there is a 26 mile path around Lake Geneva itself that passes by residences and continual views of the lake. You can also plan to attack the walk in chunks, as there are multiple points to enter and exit the trail. Tours are also offered for boating on the lake.

## Broadway Diner

304 Broadway Street

Baraboo, Wisconsin

608- 356-3287

The diner is simply beautiful to look at, especially at night when the neon is on. The Oasis is one of a small number of diners that came to the mid-west in the 1950s that is still around.







Wisconsin was not the destination of many diners. There were not many diners located in Wisconsin over the years. In fact, Frank's Diner in Kenosha is the only one still standing today, and historians are not aware of too many others over the years. In the past couple of decades, four diners have moved into the state, three as used diners from the east and one is a newly built low model diner. The way the Castree family runs the Broadway Diner, one might think the diner is still back on the east coast.

So many of these diners I often lament that I just don't get there enough. Or I always seem to hit them for one particular meal. With the Broadway Diner in Baraboo, this diner is usually my breakfast stop on the way home from Minnesota. I see their lunch and dinner menu and I wish I was around to try more than just breakfast.

Breakfast seems to be the main draw at the Broadway Diner. Fortunately, with both a grill out front in the diner and a fully functional kitchen in the back, their choices for a breakfast meal are impressive. It also doesn't hurt that they have moved into the catering business. Between their knowledge of the restaurant business, the Castrees have upped the anti on their menu just enough that you take notice, but not enough so that you say, "this isn't diner food any longer." Their Harvest Hash uses "Diced red, Idaho and sweet potatoes...", and they use items like hickory smoked bacon and bake their own cinnamon rolls and bread for french toast.

The Broadway Diner was built by the Silk City Dining Car Company of Paterson, New Jersey in 1954. That year was a transition year for Silk City's design. The Village Diner in Red Hook, New York shows Silk City's previous design that they basically stayed with in the 1940s, into the early 1950s. For a couple of years, Silk City jumped into a design like the current Broadway Diner: vertical flutes, no monitor roofline on the outside and a flatter ceiling on the inside. By the mid to late 1950s, they would change again to a design like you see at Johnny B's Diner in Glenmont, New York.

The diner started out as the A&P Diner in Groton, Connecticut. The diner would change names over the years. In the 1980s, it would go from the Bridge Diner to the Twin Bridge Diner and finally to Rosie's Diner. It would keep this name until it closed for good in 2005. Steve Harwin, a diner restorer, bought the diner and brought it to Cleveland where he worked on rehabbing the diner. It was not until 2011 that he would find a new owner for the diner. The diner was sold to Jeff and Vonnie Castree who intended to place the diner in Baraboo, Wisconsin. They had the diner attached to a new building which would house a modern kitchen, bathrooms and a nicely built dining room that matched the diner impeccably. This addition ranks right up there with the Tin Goose Diner addition in Port Clinton, Ohio. The time and effort to make the addition match the diner part is a testament to the dedication of the owner.

### **One other thing: The Dells**

<https://www.wisdells.com>

Wisconsin Dells and Lake Delton combine together to be known as The Dells. They are just a bit north of Baraboo. Tourism started in the 1850s as more of an outdoor, boat tours and natural wonders destination. Today the community is called the Waterpark Capital of the World. Like any popular vacation spot of today, they have branched out to more than just Waterparks.

The Dells still has a number of roadside related stops. Websites like [roadsideamerica.com](http://roadsideamerica.com) lists a good number of quirky tourist traps and calls The Dells, "... one of America's most over-the-top Tourism Meccas." And in tourist towns like The Dells, you will have your pick of well run independent motels that many roadside fanatics appreciate.

## Fleetwood Diner

300 S Ashley St  
Ann Arbor  
Michigan

Date:



## Cindy's Diner

230 W Berry St  
Fort Wayne  
Indiana

Date:



## Oasis Diner

405 W Main St  
Plainfield  
Indiana

Date:



## Frank's Diner

508 58th St  
Kenosha  
Wisconsin

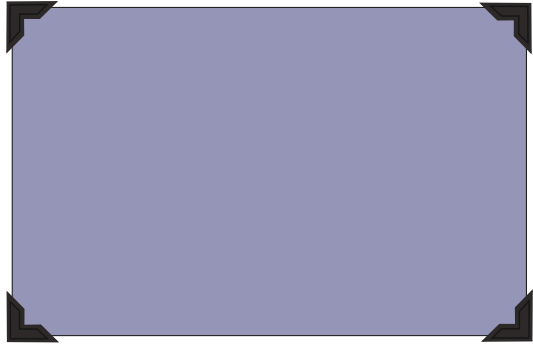
Date:



# Broadway Diner

304 Broadway St  
Baraboo  
Wisconsin  
Date:

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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

①	
②	
③	
④	

## Hi-Lo Diner

4020 E Lake Street

Minneapolis, Minnesota

612-353-6568

A second life! So many diners are sent to the scrap heap. It is awesome to see awesome diners find a second life. And with the Hi-Lo Diner, this diner is fortunate enough to get a fantastic second life that everyone should appreciate.







The Hi-Lo Diner is not the first diner to go upscale, and they will not be the last diner to go upscale either. But the formula that the Hi-Lo Diner is using has been working so far. That formula? Take the diner classics and raise the bar in some clear way, add some adult beverages including some signature drinks and viola, you got yourself a hip diner.

Breakfast. Some of the creative items include: Hash-Stuffed-Hash, which is corned beef, hash browns, two sunny-side-up eggs, onion & peppers and hollandaise sauce, french toast which uses lavender creme brulee french toast and their pancakes have a hint of lemon zest in them. There are also a few diners that make their own donuts. Cindy's Diner in Fort Wayne has for a number of years and the Swan Street Diner in Buffalo, New York is a newcomer to the donut trade. But the Hi-Lo Diner takes their donuts to the next level. The Hi-Lo tops their donuts with items like pulled pork, fried chicken or peanut butter and banana with the Velvet Elvis.

Lunch only has a few items like a pulled pork sandwich, grilled cheese and burgers. There are also a number of salads and a Mediterranean grain bowl which is made up of brown rice and quinoa. Dinner adds a few more items like mac & cheese and meatloaf and then The Commercial. A Commercial is a Minnesota name for a hot beef dinner or sandwich, dedicated to salesmen who used to be called commercial travelers. As they often traveled by train, a quick meal set up directly for these commercial travelers came to be known as The Commercial.

## Band Box Diner

729 S 10th Street

Minneapolis, Minnesota

612-332-0850

It is great when history and good food come together. The Band Box might not be as original as the Fort Diner in Fort Madison, Iowa, but the owner and the atmosphere are as real as water and their fresh cut french fries. When in Minneapolis visiting the Hi-Lo or Mickey's in St. Paul, don't forget about the gem in the rough.





I knew how awesome my Band Box experiences have been, and how busy the place was on both of my visits, but one story I read on-line caught me off guard. In 2015 the Star Tribune reported that the diner was in desperate need of a new flat top grill. The grill that they had was from 1985 and it was failing. In came the dedicated customers of the Band Box Diner. The customers went onto a crowd-funding website and started a drive to raise \$5,000 in donations for the new grill. And they succeeded! Owner Brad Ptacek and his daughter Bailey Jimenz were floored. "Having everyone reach and donate kind of ... made [us] realize what a staple we are in the community," Jimenz said.

The Band Box has a simple but effective menu, and as I learned one day, the french fries are fresh cut, not packaged. In asking the cook one day if the french fries were real, because I had been getting too many orders of packaged french fries lately, he responded, "The french fries are real, the water is real, the counter is real. It's all real." And the hamburgers are really good as well. They are placed on a pretzel roll, which only adds to the flavor, in my opinion. For breakfast they have a menu item named Ze French Lil Buddy, which is eggs, cheese, sausage, sandwiched between French toast.

The Band Box sits in a densely packed neighborhood, so parking can be a premium. But the effort is very much worth it.

The Hi-Lo Diner is a Fodero diner built in 1957. The diner was sent to Gibsonia, Pennsylvania, north of Pittsburgh where it was aptly known as the Venus Diner. For years the diner grew in popularity and was famous for its home made pies. Unfortunately its owner retired and the diner was put up for sale. It was bought by Steve Harwin, diner restorer who moved it to Cleveland, Ohio in hopes of flipping it to a new owner.

And Harwin was successful. He sold it to a couple of Minneapolis businessmen who were looking to liven up their lot and the local neighborhood with a talking piece. A diner! They bought the diner from Steve Harwin, who fixed up a few things in the diner and sent it to Minnesota.

The Band Box Diner was built by Butler Manufacturing roughly around 1939. At one time there were approximately 13 of these Band Box Diners in Minneapolis-St. Paul, all owned by Bert & Harry Wyman. Their last name was originally Weisman, but they changed it to Wyman due to Antisemitism in Minneapolis at the time.

At the start of the Twentieth Century there were actually a large number of lunch wagons in Minneapolis-St. Paul. Being so far from the east-coast, while the shipping of lunch wagons was possible, shipping diners proved to be more difficult. So when the Wymans were looking for a chain of restaurants to copy the White Castle chain, they went with teh boxy Band Box diner style created by Butler.

By 1972 there was only one left. In 2000 the diner was landmarked by the city. Currently the Band Box is owned by Brad Ptacek.

One other thing: Minneapolis Park System

<https://www.minneapolisparks.org/>

The Minneapolis Park System is “a renowned urban park system spanning 6,809 acres of parkland and water. Featured among its 180 park properties are 55 miles of parkways, 102 miles of Grand Rounds biking and walking paths, 22 lakes, 12 formal gardens....”

For a city that most people associated with cold and snow, the city has a top notch park system and a plethora of access to land around the Mississippi River. The River is lined by parks and walking trails between Minneapolis and St. Paul, which seems like enough, but if you research the park system even more, that is just the tip of the iceberg. All of this is highlighted by the Mississippi River and the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway, but there is so much more possible if you check out the web site.

## Dinky Diner

104 NE 4th Street

Decatur, Iowa

641-446-6581

Late model Valentine diners don't get enough appreciation. This one should. The real reason for the diner's success is the owner, especially in a small town like Decatur, Iowa. Visit this diner to see how a successful diner can be run in a small town.







When your diner is in a small town, there are two thoughts: There is no other place, so the food can be mediocre or it is such a small town the food better be good to draw in the customer. Fortunately for the Dinky Diner, the latter is true in this case. The menu is your typical small town diner fare, done right. But like any righteous Iowa restaurant, they make their own pork tenderloin. The website "Des Moines" rated the Dinky Diner's version a 7.5 out of 10. Other web sites mention that there can be a wait for tables at the diner on the weekend due to the notoriety of their pork tenderloins. I have never tried the pork tenderloin, but I have had their daily specials and I can say I was always happy with my choices. The Des Moines web site also noted the same interesting tidbit I noted. Their specials come with three sides, not just two. What I found surprising was that chocolate pudding was offered as one of those sides when I was there. Some of the sides include pea salad, kraut salad, green beans, mashed potatoes, jello, and sometimes more than one flavor of jello. Besides the pork tenderloin, they also have your typical diner items like hot meatloaf and hot beef. They also make their own pies, so if you have room in your stomach, especially after devouring all three of those sides, you could consider a slice of pie.

The Dinky Diner is covered with license plates from practically all 50 states and even some Canadian Provinces. The Dinky Diner seems to get their business from three avenues: locals, Interstate travelers and people who find out about the place from the internet.

The Dinky Diner started out in Ellsworth, Kansas. The Double Deluxe Valentine built diner started out in 1967 at Exit 225 on Interstate 70. At the time, it was known as the Elkhorn Diner and operated until roughly the year 2000. In 2005, it was bought by Vickie Reed and moved to Decatur, Iowa where it has been since.

The Double Deluxe model is the same as the Broadway Diner in Columbia Missouri. The size allowed Valentine to build diners that had more room in the kitchen, but more important from a business standpoint, room enough for a fair number of booths along with the counter seating expected in a diner. Before this style of Valentine diner was produced, Valentine diners did not have room for booths unless an owner purchased a two or three unit diner. As is similar with deccional diners back east, you could dedicate one diner to the cooking and counter and then dedicate the other diners to booth or table seating. But with the Double Deluxe model, which did come in two sections, an owner could purchase a diner that had a larger kitchen, a bathroom available from the inside of the diner and a row of booths along two of the outside walls.

There are still a few other later models of Valentines out in the wild. Stacy's Diner in Junction City, Kansas only has a few seats at their tiny counter and I passed what looks like a Double Deluxe model in Hugoton, Kansas. There was also one up until recently in Stanberry, Missouri, but that one was demolished a couple of years ago.

Even with the larger than usual size of this Valentine diner, it can still be operated by two or three people with ease. I have never been to the diner on the weekend, so they might have another person or two on staff on the weekends.

**One other thing:** St. Joseph, Missouri

<https://stjomo.com/>

My attempt is to get you closer to Kansas City for the next diner. St. Joseph is home to thirteen museums and is a good stop in between Decatur and Kansas City. Museums range from your typical regional museum to places like the Glore Psychiatric Museum and the Pony Express National Museum. With 13 museums and many more cultural choices, St. Joseph may just surprise you.

If you enjoy walking, St. Joseph has twenty-six miles of parkway in and around the city and a separate park along the Missouri River. Or you can just walk around in downtown and go shopping for an afternoon..



## Fort Diner

801 Avenue H

Fort Madison, Iowa

319-372-1949

A rare Butler built diner. Over the years, the Fort Diner has become an institution in Fort Madison. Any person who calls themselves a diner fanatic needs to storm the Fort.





The Fort Diner is an institution in Fort Madison. Today it is officially known as Jake & Walt's Fort Diner. Reviews call the portions enormous. Onlyinyourstate.com says, "You'll find overloaded omelettes, crispy bacon, and a variety of breakfast sandwiches on the menu." The breakfast menu is pretty typical of any diner. Being in Iowa they do offer breakfast items like bologna and eggs or regular steak and eggs, but you can also get items like biscuit and gravy, and has-browns on the side.

Lunch is really where the Fort Diner shines. Their pork tenderloin is hand pounded and breaded daily. They are known for their Wallyburger. What is the Wallyburger? It is a pound of ground beef with grilled onions and at least two types of cheese. I found out later that they have a challenge that only two people have been able to accomplish in twenty years. The challenge is eating four Wallyburgers in one hour. Other popular items include the veal cutlet sandwich. Many of the items on the menu are home made, but someone on-line pointed out that the corn nuggets were frozen.

Like many of my favorite diners, the food is cooked right in front of you. The grill and all the cooking instruments are behind the counter. Beyond the counter are a number of tables along the windows. There is a good amount of space between the counter and the tables, which is rare for an older diner.

I unfortunately do not know any of the history of the Fort Diner. Maybe someone will read this book and share the history of the diner.

Both Butler built diners that are still standing today are included in this book. We really don't know how many portable restaurants Butler built. We will get to the reason why in a minute, but first some history on Butler.

Butler was started by Emanuel Norquist and Charles Butler. They met in Clay Center, Kansas where Norquist was putting together a steel tank. Butler saw the potential in a similar type of business. In 1909, Emmanuel again brought inspiration for the next chapter of the company. Needing a building to store his new car, the Butler company designed a metal one car garage. In 1938, Butler took on a challenge from the United States government for all the grain bin companies to build a total of 30,666 steel bins. Butler bought a building in Galesburg, Illinois and set out to accomplish the task. They built more than half of the bins the government needed. By 1940, the company was building a line of various buildings and sometime shortly later. I believe that around this time is when Butler made their attempt to jump into the roadside stand and portable restaurant business. They sent 13 of these buildings, which they called the Band Box to Minneapolis - St. Paul and also this building to Fort Madison.

The issue historians have with Butler, is that we have no clue how many more portable restaurants they built. Both of these buildings were in their one advertising brochure which seems like a really odd coincidence. We do know that Butler did produce some other buildings. The key give away seems to be their window design. Each section of window is split up into 4 sections, and we have found a few similar looking buildings with the same window setup. None of them are acting as restaurants anymore, though.

**One other thing:** Bentonsport & Bonaparte

<https://villagesofvanburen.com/directory.html?category=36>

Both of these quaint villages sit on the Des Moines River a bit to the west of Fort Madison. Both villages sit off of main roads and ooze the essence of the 1800s. Both a very small river communities with a small number of businesses, most aimed at tourists looking for history or looking for artists. Bonaparte also sits on the Mormon Trail and has a total of five historic buildings registered on the national registry. In nearby Bentonsport, they have a bridge from 1902 that is currently used as a pedestrian walkway over the Des Moines River. Bentonsport has its own historic district including a fudge shop inside the old general store. I think you will be surprised by how quaint these two villages are.

## Broadway Diner

22 S 4th Street

Columbia, Missouri

573- 875-1173

The Broadway Diner is an icon to Columbia, Missouri probably more for the family that runs it than for the food. The Johnson family has preserved this late model Valentine in a state not well known for its authentic diners.





With the ownership behind the Broadway Diner and the Dinky Diner in Iowa, both later model Valentines, it is easy to fall in love with this style of diner, even if earlier Valentines have more flair and pinache.

David Johnson was quoted in 2019, "Not only a good meal but also a sense of community." The Johnson family at the Broadway Diner are very community oriented, During the Covid mess, they were serving free meals to children who would have otherwise went without a breakfast or a lunch.

Edward had a passion for the diner and exclaimed to Randy Garbin in a visit, "Have a look around, we clean everyday." That passion for the diner was passed along to his son David when he took over. David doesn't consider his job work, he more considers it his passion in life.

For a number of years, the Broadway Diner was open overnights. Ed's son David would often man the overnight hours. As of 2019, those hours were removed from the diner's schedule. David said the decision was "personally gut-wrenching," but that it had to be made as a small section of society was becoming too rough.

The Broadway Diner is home of The Stretch. The Stretch, is named after a regular customer is a pile of hash browns and scrambled eggs covered with chili, cheddar cheese, green peppers and onions. Most of the menu is typical of any diner, but I saw on-line that they have French toast with a fried egg in the middle, topped with bacon jam. They serve hash browns as their potato. Their biscuits and sausage gravy are quite good. There are also a number of omelets and breakfast burritos available.



The Broadway Diner is a Double Deluxe model Valentine diner, similar in style to the Dinky Diner in Decatur, Iowa. The serial numbers are 2465 and 2466. The intention for this diner was to be sent to Louisiana, but that gentleman passed away before the diner could be accepted.

There are two other Valentine buildings in Columbia. One is the former Minute Inn, started in 1938. This was the first diner that Edward Johnson ran, for roughly 10 years before moving to his current diner. The Minute Inn was the site of a sit-in in 1960. "Four of the demonstrators were white, five of them black." The other Valentine building is a root beer stand for the regional chain, Mugs Up.

Ed Johnson bought the current Broadway Diner in 1989. He changed the name from Fran's to the Broadway Diner because, well, the diner was located on Broadway at the time. Ed spent \$5,000 for a new sign, touched up the interior and added some patterned stainless steel to the exterior. The diner was moved in 2001 to the corner of 4th and Cherry Street where it sits today. During this move the kitchen was expanded with a building behind the diner.

The Broadway Diner, just like the Dinky Diner in Iowa are very original. The diner has had some refreshing over the years, but the set-up is true to the original design. A number of low stools at the counter and booths along the wall with a L shaped extension for extra booth seating. The floor now has red and white linoleum which matches the red and white on the walls and ceiling. They are offset by the blue and teal on the stools and the tables in the booths.

**One other thing:** Jefferson City

<https://www.visitjeffersoncity.com/>

Besides being the capital of the state of Missouri, there are other things you can see in Jefferson City. But the Missouri State Capitol is a nice place to start. Besides being a center of state government, there is a museum housed in the Capitol. Before you leave the grounds, make sure to stop at the Lewis and Clark memorial among other highlights.

The Missouri State Penitentiary was open from 1836 to 2004 and is now a museum. The history that the prison hold may surprise you. If you have worked up a little hunger from your touring of Jefferson City, make sure to check out the Central Dairy Ice Cream Parlor. Central Dairy was established in 1920 in Columbia, and opened up in Jefferson City in 1934.



## Hi-Lo Diner

4020 E Lake St  
Minneapolis  
Minnesota

Date:



## Band Box Diner

729 S 10th St  
Minneapolis  
Minnesota

Date:



## Dinky Diner

104 4th St  
Decatur City  
Iowa  
Date:

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## Fort Diner

801 Ave H  
Fort Madison  
Iowa  
Date:

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## Broadway Diner

22 S 4th St  
Columbia  
Missouri

Date:

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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

①	
②	
③	
④	

## Hayes Hamburgers

2502 NE Vivion Road

Kansas City, Missouri

816-453-5575

I have only been to this diner once, but I love the vibe at this Valentine Diner. It's a local legend housed inside a Valentine diner, so it is the best of both worlds. Two reasons to visit.





There are many Valentine diners in the state of Kansas and neighboring states, as Valentine was headquartered in Wichita, Kansas. It is always good to see a small diner succeed, and in the case of Hayes Hamburgers, thrive. Valentines were not made to be large diners until many years later in their existence, so many owners needed to serve quick meals and turn over customers. Hayes Hamburgers also does this well. The menu is made for quick service. All of the items on the menu can be made in the small kitchen area, which is typical of any smaller diner.

The hamburgers that Hayes serves are the slider type. The smaller hamburgers like one would get at a White Castle or a White Tower. In the old days, most hamburger places made the burgers daily, and would never ever think of using frozen hamburger patties. Fortunately Hayes Hamburgers still follows this mantra. Hamburgers of this size are quicker for the grill-person to cook, and are easier to eat, sometimes in only one or two bites. Many people order onions on top but fortunately you can choose to get your burger(s) any way you like them.

In a way this diner reminds me of the Fleetwood Diner in Ann Arbor, Michigan. They are different manufacturers, but both places are open 24 hours a day and have similar vibes. Both are no nonsense, very utilitarian in appearance and efficiently get the job done of serving the customer and serving them well with the menus they offer.

Beyond the Hamburgers, Hayes does serve breakfast all day. You can get pancakes at 2 pm or at 2 am. Other items on their breakfast menu include your typical egg items and even steak and eggs. Some people like to put Hayes chili on top of their eggs. Their chili is typically served on top of pinto beans and with Saltine crackers are on the side.

Hayes Hamburgers is a 1955 Valentine diner. The front of the diner, what the customer sees first, is designed similar to the Double Deluxe model that you see on a couple other diners in this list: Dinky Diner in Decatur City, Iowa and Broadway Diner in Columbia, Missouri. By the mid 1950s, Valentine moved away from diners that had a lot of white metal with red highlights, either baked or painted, with small windows. By the mid 1950s, Valentine moved to a more boxy design, with larger picture windows and the siding used in the diner was minimized to a narrow band up by the roof and a much smaller area below the picture windows. By the 1950s, the desire for a good number of the customers to sit in booths instead of just at a stool at a counter had taken a foothold, hence, Valentine changed designs.

The interior of Hayes Hamburgers is very utilitarian and very clean for a place that has such a quick turnaround in customers. A large board with the menu items and the prices for each item is pretty much in front of your face when you enter the building. There is a counter in front of you as you enter, with the cook stationed to the right of the entryway. You can hear the hamburgers and potatoes sizzle on the grill, like any good hamburger place should be. To the left are some tables for either two or four people. While the outside is dominated by a shade of blue, the interior is dominated by white, which makes it easier to clean. Places like White Tower and White Castle built the word white into their name to show off their cleanliness. But the booths and the stool tops are blue, so the color scheme does match inside and out.

**One other thing:** Kansas Explorer

<https://kansassampler.org/kansasexplorersclub/>

Catch the explorer mindset. With a headline like this, it's hard not to get excited. I highly suggest purchasing the Kansas Guidebook 2. This is a great view into what there is to see in Kansas. There are places for everyone, soda fountains, restaurants of all types, museums and anything and everything worth seeing for someone.

But if you don't want to purchase the book, or you just can not wait, check out the 8 wonders of Kansas on this site. There are the top items to visit in the state of Kansas in such topics as art, architecture, commerce, cuisine, customs, geography, history and people. The program has been so successful, that some communities have made their own lists and published them on the website listed above. So go explore Kansas!



# Davies Chuck Wagon Diner

9495 West Colfax Avenue

Lakewood, Colorado

303-237-5252

Everything is majestic about Davies' Chuck Wagon Diner. The diner itself, the neon sign, the mountains in the distance and Colfax Avenue. When in Denver this needs to be one of your first stops, and hopefully you traveled a good distance of Colfax Avenue to get there.





Davies' Chuck Wagon Diner would be a nice diner to visit in any part of the country, but for me there is something extra special about visiting a great looking diner outside of the north-east. Even better, is the specific location of Davies'. Being located on Colfax Avenue and within view of the Rocky Mountains really puts the icing on the cake. The large neon sign also fits the whole Colfax Avenue vibe perfectly.

Diner fans might be interested to know that there were two other Mountain View diners that had the words Chuck Wagon in their name. Diners in Gary, Indiana(gone) and Urbana, Illinois(now Duanesburg, New York) also were called Chuck Wagon diners. Those two diners also

served as Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets for a time.

There is no fried chicken here though, but there is chicken fried steak that was voted the best by the Denver Westword. The Chuck Wagon breakfast consists of a sirloin steak and eggs, hashbrowns, toast or hotcakes. The farther you get outside of the north-east the more you see hashbrowns instead of fried potatoes, but it is unique when you see a choice between toast and hot cakes. They have a number of meat and egg combinations. You can get ham, bacon or sausage with your eggs, but you can also get a hamburger patty, smoked pork chop or even chicken fried chicken or steak with your eggs as well.

For lunch you can get a number of those same meat items, just with a choice of two sides. Davies' also serves chili. You can get theirs in a tortilla or a burrito.

If you want some items to go, you can take home a bottle of their Habanero hot sauce or a coffee mug or shirt with the diner's logo on them.

## Kings Chef Diner

110 East Costilla Street

Colorado Springs, Colorado

719-446-6581

This diner is iconic. Not only is the food really good, but the place is alive. A legendary diner that is just way too far from home. If you're a true diner fan, you're visiting this location and not their storefront place.





Some places just have a great vibe. Places like the Fleetwood Diner, Cindy's Diner or King's Chef Diner. Even if this place was not in an authentic Valentine diner, it would still be a nice place to visit. But the fact that it is located inside a unique Valentine diner. That is the game clincher for me. Just like the Fleetwood Diner, stickers play an important part of your experience at the diner. At the Fleetwood, the stickers are brought into the diner and placed on the wall by customers. At the King's Chef, you get a sticker if you clean your plate. You also get a piece of candy as well.

The King's Chef is officially the best diner in the state of Colorado. You might think this isn't a big deal in a western state, but there are actually a number of good authentic diners in the state. Some didn't make the book, but I still look forward to revisiting them again, hopefully soon.

Owner Gary Geiser has gone out of his way to make sure the food is way above average. The double smoked bacon that I had with my meal several years ago was the best bacon I have had in a diner that I can remember. There is a banner inside the diner that they use free-range meats and get as much GMO-free products as they are able to obtain.

A couple of items that are popular at the King's Chef are the green chili and "The Thing." The Thing is large! It is five pounds of shredded potatoes, meats and cheese all placed on top of bread. Try earning a sticker from that meal. You can also order this as a half order or a quarter order.

Davies' Chuck Wagon Diner is Mountain View diner #516 and opened June, 1957. William Lyman Davies opened the diner in 1957 and ran it until 1977. Davies would travel for Walgreens as their drug store restaurant supervisor, so probably became introduced to the idea of diners through his travels east. Davies sold to Clayton Lee in 1977 who sold it to then 21 year old Dwayne Clark. Dwayne's father ran the Clark's Coffee Shop chain in and around Denver. Interestingly enough, Clark didn't buy the land that the Chuck Wagon Diner stands on until 1993. In 1997, the diner was added to the National Registry of Historic Places. Due to the way Mountain View designed their diners for the long haul, there is not a row of booths beyond the counter. To make up for this, there is only a counter on one side of the diner. Tables and booths are where the counter isn't. There are even a few more in the left corner of the diner.

King's Chef is a 1956 Valentine diner. The castle turrets on top of the diner were a special order put into Valentine. Floyd, "Sam" Johnson opened the diner and three years later moved it from across the street to its current location. In his obituary his wife Connie Johnson said, "He liked people. That's why he liked the diner because he was right in the middle of the people." Johnson sold the diner to Gary Geiser in 1996 and actually built birdhouses in the shape of the diner after entering retirement. Neither owner has really touched anything inside or outside the diner in a negative way. The diner still looks fantastic and original. When you enter, there is a curved counter on the right side, and the kitchen and grill are beyond the counter on the left side of the diner. To maximize space, there are a few seats along the window on the right side of the diner just beyond the counter.

**One other thing:** Colfax Avenue and Heritage Lakewood

<https://www.lakewood.org/Home> Then search Heritage Lakewood.

Colfax Avenue through Denver and its suburbs is a feast for the roadside eye. The majority of neon signs belong to hotels, but other businesses have grand signage as well. The hotels are in various states of repute and repair, so do your research before reserving a room. And on the other end of Colfax sits a closed Valentine diner. We can only hope it reopens one day.

Heritage Lakewood is a collection of museums. The outside "museum" is what you will want to visit first. The city has collected a number of roadside icons and put them together in a park setting. You can visit a Valentine diner, and many other neat roadside buildings.



## Frank's Diner

11516 W 2nd Avenue  
Spokane, Washington

10929 N. Newport Highway  
N. Spokane, Washington

Frank's has become a Spokane institution where breakfast shines. It is the only train car diner in this book and is a great example of a well cared for train car diner.





Frank's Diner is the winner of Best Diner and Best Breakfast for 18 years running by the Inlander's People Choice Awards. While Frank's Diners serve the other meals, it is the breakfast that brings the customers back.

The photo on this page is from the inside of the North Spokane location, while the outside photo is of the downtown Spokane location. In both diners, there is one counter which you pass by when you enter the place from the main entrance. This is where all the short order cooking is done, so for me, sitting at the counter is my favorite place in the diner. Beyond the counter there are booths and additions so that the diners have more space for customers.

One of the more popular menu items is the Frank's breakfast combo - two eggs, eight dollar-sized pancakes, bacon, toast and hash-browns. The diner has some interesting breakfast starters: fried green tomatoes, country fried steak and occasionally they have crispy deviled eggs. They have all your typical breakfast favorites like omelets, benedicts, french toast, hot cakes and biscuit and gravy and even have duck bacon.

It has been noted that the employees at Frank's Diners are very proactive in donating to local causes. They have a voluntary payroll reduction that is matched by the diner. The diner also sells hot cakes kits so you can make their pancakes at home, and the proceeds also go to help local non-profits.



My lone trip to Spokane was on a whim. I had roughly a week off from work, and looked around air airline prices. Spokane had a really good deal, I had never been there before, and there were a number of diners I have never visited before in the greater area. And when I say greater area, I mean east to Chester, Montana and south to Boise, Idaho. As usual, I probably bit off more than I could chew in one trip. Starting in Spokane, I had to hit the two Frank's Diners and the Knight's Diner, all three of them being converted railroad car diners. Both Frank's were open, but Knights Diner was closed at the time.

Frank's Diners are two railroad cars used by executives. From Frank's web-site:

"In 1906, Barney Smith manufactured this car as an "observation car". It remained unsold until 1909, when it was purchased by the Northern Pacific Railroad and remodeled to suit their needs as a private car for the president of the railroad.

Car NO. 1787 (downtown car) served as a presidential car until it was replaced in 1931.

Frank Knight bought the car in Seattle and ran the diner in Seattle until 1991 when it lost its lease. I do not know if Frank or his family was running the diner in 1991. The diner was then transported to Spokane and set up in downtown Spokane.

His brother Jack Knight had operated Knight's Diner in Spokane for years, so the town was familiar with train car diners. It is mentioned that Knight's Diner has been in operation in Spokane since 1949.

Pat Jeppesen was responsible for the move and the following restoration of the car to its former glory. In May 1996, Larry Brown took over Frank's Diner and business boomed.

**One other thing:** Hudson's Hamburgers

<http://www.hudsonshamburgers.com/>

"It all started in 1907 with Harley M. Hudson in a tent known as the Missouri Kitchen." What Knight's and Frank's Diners are to Spokane, Hudson's is, and even more, to Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. Sadly, there was a festival in town the day I tried to visit and parking was impossible. But the radio station I was listening to was even gushing about Hudson's. Photographs on-line show the place being a counter only. The burgers only get spicy mustard or ketchup and onions if you want them. As their T-shirts say, "No lettuce, no tomatoes, no mayonnaise, no yellow mustard, no relish, no milkshakes, no bacon, etc." Maybe next time I can visit.

Hayes Hamburgers

2502 NE Vivion Rd  
Kansas City  
Missouri

Date:

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Davies' Chuck Wagon

9495 W. Colfax Ave  
Lakewood  
Colorado

Date:

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\_\_\_\_\_

## Kings Chef Diner

110 E Costilla St  
Colorado Springs  
Colorado

Date:



\_\_\_\_\_

## Frank's Diner

1516 West 2nd Ave  
Spokane  
Washington

Date:



\_\_\_\_\_

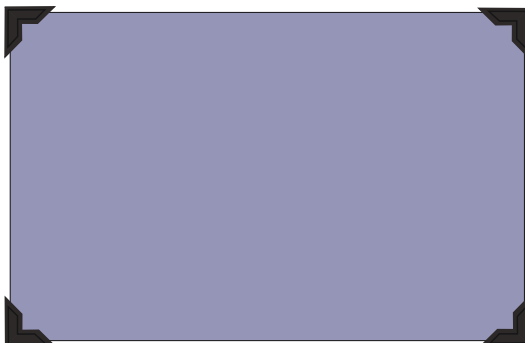
## Frank's Diner

10929 N Newport Hwy

Spokane

Washington

Date:



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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

①	
②	
③	
④	

# Village Diner

268 Rt 6 & 209

Milford, Pennsylvania

570-491-2819

This is what all diners should be like. Classics. Elegant in its own way. But the owners don't make a fuss about it. They operate the diner right and give you plenty of choices for good quality diner food.





In the photo above you see Kyle Weaver who formerly worked for Stackpole Books. They were the company that published the book, “Diners of Pennsylvania” and also mine and Mario Monti’s, “Diners of New York.” Kyle was working on updating the book for a second edition and I was fortunate to tag along with him as he visited a number of diners in the northeast corner of Pennsylvania. Behind him is a unique design element of this Mountain View Diner. Those white posts in the ceiling that also connect to the floor act as a partition that owners could implement to create a partially secluded dining room. The only other diner I have seen this in is now Sally’s Diner in Erie, Pennsylvania.

The current owners of the Milford Diner are Greek, so their menu has a distinct Greek influence at times. This is good for the customer. “We don’t do fancy shmancy. We do homemade delicious food.” Some of the breakfast choices include everything you would want on a breakfast menu with an ample number of omelets available. For meat choices, they include turkey sausage, canadian bacon and Taylor ham because they are so close to New Jersey. Some interesting additions include a breakfast pot pie and baklava pancakes.

The owners are not kidding when they say they are Greek. This is a Greek diner menu with something for everyone. Not afraid to try different items, they recently posted on facebook, “Have you ever had a chopped cheese? If you have lived in NYC, this is a common sandwich you would get at the corner bodega. Chopped up burger with onion, cheese, lettuce, tomato, mayo, ketchup, mustard on a hoagie.”



The Village Diner is a 1956 Mountain View Diner. The diner is #462. The Musselwhite family started both diners in Milford. They started in 1927 with a Ward & Dickinson diner in downtown Milford. That diner was replaced once with a 1950 Mountain View Diner and later by a 1972 Manno diner. In 1956, the Musselwhites bought a second Mountain View and placed it out on the highway so as to capture both the downtown and the out of town trade. In 1990, Ethel Musselwhite sold the Village Diner to Dimitros Pagelos.

The Village Diner sits close to the beginning of US Route 6 in Pennsylvania as it crosses the New York border just up the road. This route into Pennsylvania was bypassed in the 1970s by I-84 and drivers on I-84 can see the diner as they whiz on by. Hopefully they see the diner and take an exit and stop. US Route 6 through northern Pennsylvania is a really nice ride if you have the time and there are more than a few good diners you can stop at along the way including Gigi's Diner in Corry at the other end of the state. Really, there are a number of diners on US Route 6 that could have been chosen for this book.

The color scheme of the diner on the inside is pink and gray. There is a good sized counter straight in front of you and booths all along the front wall. The counter stops and curves to an end on the left and a sort of extended dining room begins on the left for extra table seating. The ceiling is all original. You can see the recessed lighting between the two levels of the ceiling which was quite popular in many 1950s diners. Mountain View used two bands of stainless steel, split up by a pink band as a colorful way to split up the two sections.

**One other thing:** NY Route 97 - Upper Delaware Scenic Byway

<https://backroadplanet.com/upper-delaware-scenic-byway/>  
<https://www.upperdelawarecouncil.org/>

The southern part of this road is called the Hawk's Nest, and if this road is good enough for a Porsche commercial, it's good enough for you. This part of the road tightly hugs the mountainside and gives you scenic vistas of the Delaware River below. As you get farther away from Port Jervis, the road does get off of the edge of the mountain, though the road will still be close enough to the Delaware River most of the time. You will pass through various hamlets and villages that each offer interesting things to see and do. Off of the road a ways is the Woodstock Museum at Bethel Woods and also a number of old Catskill summer resorts. Also, if you are into fishing, this area and the region surrounding the upper end at Hancock are known if their fly fishing.

# Summit Diner

1 Union Place

Summit, New Jersey

908-277-3256

It is absolutely amazing that this stunning O'Mahony diner is in practically perfect condition after all these years. The Summit sits just outside a Train station into the city and is constantly packed to the gills with customers. With all the customers, you know the food has to meet their demands, and it does. This is the real deal.





The Summit Diner is a fantastic mix of a beautiful diner from the past and good true diner food. Matter of fact, this diner is absolutely packed with customers and take out orders during most of its operating hours. The diner is located right next to a trail station that goes into New York City, so many people traveling to and from the city will stop at the diner before or after for a sandwich or a quick meal.

One of my biases is that I am not a huge fan of larger diners. I have become more of a fan of the 1960s Mediterranean styled diners lately, but really only ones that are mostly original. In the state of New Jersey, so many diners have been remodeled so much over the years that to me they look more like a chain restaurant than a diner. Even some of the Retro styled diners are either just partially remodeled 1960s and 1970s diners, or over the top interpretations of diners.

Note I am not saying that these diners do not have good food. Many have good food, but for this book, I was looking for diners that have more than one thing that makes me want to visit them.

Author Peter Genovese says, "Order a slider (not the usual mini-burger, but a Taylor ham, egg and cheese sandwich) and cup of coffee and drink in one of the state's essential food experiences." Taylor Ham, which is also called pork roll, is a New Jersey favorite. The spinach pie, made in house, is also an essential choice if you go to the diner for lunch, but you really can't go wrong with much on the menu as they take care with so much of their food choices.

The Summit Diner is a 1938 O'Mahony diner. Jim Greberis purchased the diner from his father-in-law in 1985 and still runs the diner. Compare this diner to three other diners in this book: Northampton Diner(1938) in Northville, New York, Eddie's Paramount Diner(1940) in Rome, New York and the Tastee Diner in Bethesda, Maryland. Three of the diners have the same floor tile, a similar mix of square tiles. In the Summit Diner, the light toned tiles are a shade of blue to better match the overall scheme of the diner as there are light blue tiles under the counter. The stools are topped with orange cushions which match the band of ceramic tiles under the counter.

Something that may be missed by diner fans just traveling to diners and then leaving town shortly afterwards, is that a good number of these long time owners are very active in their community. Jim Greberis is a great example of this. Jim is the co-founder of the Other Fellow First Foundation. "Our mission is simple: We use our small endowment to provide quick financial responses to NJ families in distress. Then, using the celebrity of the Summit Diner, social media, and our friends in the Press, we attempt to creatively trumpet the community problem and attract others to join us."

The celebrity of the Summit Diner is a part of the history of the Summit Diner and can not be underscored. From Peter Genovese's multiple mentions of the diner and using the diner as the starting point of his "Jersey Diners" book to the constant attention by local, regional and national media outlets, it would seem that the Summit Diner has seen it all. But beyond this acclaim, the Summit Diner still remains a place for locals to come together.

**One other thing:** Corrado's A Family Affair - Market in Clifton

<https://www.corradosmarket.com/>

Corrado's slogan, "There is a difference" is quite true to people who like to shop in eclectic stores. Their flagship store in Clifton, New Jersey is a sight to be seen. More than just your typical grocery store, there are things at Corrado's that you will not often see in your typical market. They have sections that cover staples and packaged desserts in a number of nationalities that are always interesting to peruse. They take pride in the selection and the prices of their produce. They also have a good selection of cheeses, with a number of them labeled as their own. At this location they even have a wholesale section where you can get bulk products, which many local restaurants take advantage of. Corrado's tries to use as many New Jersey products as they can, so many of their prepared foods have a local flavor.

## D's Diner

587 E Main Street

Plains Township, Pennsylvania

570-823-1990

Really dependable 24 hour diner housed in a fantastic, beautifully preserved Fodero diner. They quietly go about their business and meet and exceed the customer's expectations.







The Scranton - Wilkes Barre region of Pennsylvania has more than its share of diners. Just like I have said before, if a number of these diners were in a region away from the other diners, they would probably make this book. Back when I was living in the western Catskills, I would come down to this region once a month. I would come to D's Diner when it was Eddie's Place a couple of times. The diner was good, the food was good, but I really did not start to truly appreciate this diner until it became D's Diner

and I was not down in this region as much as I used to be.

As with most diners in this region, I am more familiar with their dinner operations than anything else. The lunch and dinner menu starts out with salads, club sandwiches and regular sandwiches, hamburgers and hoagies. They also have the typical diner favorites like roast turkey, chopped steak, liver and onions and baked Virginia ham. D's also has a small selection of steaks and seafood, enough to give you some extra options. Some recent specials that they have served include, chicken croquettes, gyros and homemade piggies.

Reviews on-line say the breakfast is good, and maybe one day I will get down to this region for breakfast.

The diner is open 24 hours a day. Being located near the Pocono Raceway, which now houses a casino, they are more than busy enough all times of the day.



I am a little hazy on the history of this diner. I believe that this diner was the first Caesar's Wind Gap Diner in Wind Gap, Pennsylvania. A couple of sources list this diner as a 1941 O'Mahony Diner. I am thinking that this diner is a Fodero diner based upon the famous Fodero clock. The diner in Wind Gap was replaced by a 1959 Fodero, so this diner could have came to the current location any time after 1959.

A quick aside. The 1959 Wind Gap diner went missing after it was removed in 1994. One newspaper said it was headed to East Stroudsburg, but no one knows what happened to it. So if you know, please contact me.

What I do know is that Ed Biniek had the diner for 29 years, from 1987 to 2016. He fell sick and was no longer able to operate the diner, which was known as Eddie's Place during his operation of the diner. The diner was bought by Dan & Denise DeMellier and Stephen & Danielle Simko who hired back most of the staff.

The diner still has much of its original Fodero design elements. Some art deco design highlights the interior, including the famous Fodero winged clock. The main colors inside are pink and tan. Simple pink and off white tile are found under the counter.

### **One other thing: Old Forge Pizza**

<https://www.pmq.com/?s=old+forge>

The article on the top 10 pizza places in Old Forge is probably a good primer for the uninitiated. Old Forge self describes themselves as the pizza capital of the world. Most of their pizzas are rectangular and are distinctive by the cheeses they use for the topping. Most places will lock up their specific combinations of cheeses, it is that serious of a thing. Author of the Top 10 article, Jim Mirabelli, rates Arcaro and Gennell as his number one place. This place even offers a, "double-crust white pizza, which can be described as a giant grilled cheese pizza." You can also check out <https://www.nepapizzareview.com/> for reviews of more places in the Scranton - Wilkes Barre region.



Kuppy's Diner

12 Brown Street

Middletown, Pennsylvania

717-944-5122

The diner does not look like much from the outside, but go inside and breathe in the atmosphere. Inside, this is a great diner with great diner atmosphere, run by a fantastic diner family.





Kuppy's is a true blue old school community diner that gets it right. Four generations of the same family running the diner with a fifth generation working at the diner. Percy Kupp, the founder, said, "If you serve good food at reasonable prices, people will be satisfied." Each generation has been true to this mantra and added something special to the diner. Former customer Charles Selcher had been coming to the diner since it opened on August 5, 1933 and was still coming to the diner on his 100th birthday in 2013.

For breakfast, Kuppy's Diner serves items like omelets, french toast, hot cakes, and eggs Benedict. They also serve scrapple. Wikipedia describes scrapple as, "a mush of pork scraps and trimmings combined with cornmeal and wheat flour, often buckwheat flour, and spices." Then it is formed into loaves and cooked on a flat grill until golden brown. Speaking of meats, Kuppy's gives you plenty of bacon if it is part of your meal. For me, it compares to how much bacon they gave me at Whitey's Diner in Fremont, Ohio. Recent breakfast specials have included crab Benedict, hot sausage casserole and cinnamon baked french toast.

Lunch has the usual suspects with sandwiches, burgers and a number of subs, but they will also have daily specials like roast turkey with filling, stuffed pork chop or meatloaf. At one time they used to have oyster soup as a weekly special, but the price became prohibitive.

## Highspire Diner

255 2nd Street

Highspire, Pennsylvania

717-939-5366

Often overlooked by me because of Kuppy's Diner is a favorite of mine. But it is more than worthy to be on this list. The diner is really pure and the food is just as good.





The Highspire Diner doesn't get enough attention that it probably deserves, in the diner world. The Highspire is a Silk City diner and has a serial number of 5213. The 13th diner built in 1952. Gone are the boring brown tiled floors and a welcomed sight are the weaved styled light blue tiles with a smaller black square tile in the middle. These tiles go great in the diner. They match the tiles on the counter really nice. Under the counter, the tiles are formed in a pattern similar to other Silk City diners, but the contrast of the light blue and the black really work here. The stools and booths are done in a darker blue, but I have seen them in a red and to be honest, the darker blue really pops. The diner is incredibly original and makes for great photography.

The diner was opened by Mr. & Mrs. Carroll Sauder on the main thoroughfare of Highspire in more of a residential neighborhood than most restaurants. Stefanie Arndt later owned the diner. Pete & Anne Shuppy and son Chris took over in 1994.

Beyond the pristine condition of this Silk City diner, the Highspire Diner is a great community diner. They are open for all three meals. Some of the recent dinner special that they have had include stuffed chicken breast and mashed potatoes and top round of beef with a baked potato. Breakfast includes items like french toast, omelets and pancakes. They do serve grits, which are typically a southern item. For northerners, grits is a porridge made from boiled cornmeal. For meats they have bacon and scrapple like Kuppy's and they also have what they call rope sausage.

Two diners on the same location, one family has owned for the entire time. Not much history? Would you be wrong! Kuppy's Diner started out in 1933 with a 1933 Ward & Dickinson diner. In 1938 owner Percy Kupp decided to upgrade to a diner that traded 100 square feet of kitchen space for 100 square feet of customer space. He bought Ward & Dickinson #310 which is the diner you see today. The story goes that Percy sent the older diner to Elizabethtown and rented it out to the Baker family. But then a couple odd issues popped up. The diner in a photo of the Elizabethtown diner did not match the size and style of the original Kuppy's. Next came the clincher. A Conditional Sales Docket showed that in December of 1939, Percy Kupp sold the Bakers a 42 foot long Ward & Dickinson diner numbered 318. Mystery solved! Although it does open up many more questions. Where did the old diner go? Did Percy finance the diner for the Bakers?

When you enter the diner, the counter and grill are to the left. It can be a tight squeeze getting to an open stool when the diner is crowded. Behind the counter is the grill area, and above that the original menu board. Straight ahead is the original refrigerator. On the right side of the door are six booths. This was the trade-off from the older diner that only had two booths here. The end wall was cut out and a small dining room area was added on to the diner for more seating.

Every summer, Kuppy's Diner has been hosting a car show since 2001 where proceeds go to a local cause. And this is the real deal, prizes are given out for the top three cars. They take over the downtown area with cars and motorcycles. I see these events as a win win for the community.

## **One other thing: AACA Museum**

<https://www.aacamuseum.org/>

They claim that they are one of the top automobile museums in the United States. Some people go to Hershey, Pennsylvania for the chocolate, some people go for the amusement park, the owners of Kuppy's go for Hershey Bears hockey games, but others go for the car museum. The car museum, as is typical, has a number of collections on display that are on loan to the museum, but they also have a number of permanent collections. They have the nation's largest display of full-sized vintage buses, including the bus used in the movie, Forrest Gump. They also world's most extensive collection of the "Car of Tomorrow," a.k.a. the Tucker. The museum also houses a Valentine diner from 1941. This was the Flo-Inn Cafe from Wichita, Kansas and was donated to the museum by one of its members, and restored to museum quality.

## Village Diner

268 Rt 6 and 209  
Milford  
Pennsylvania

Date:

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## Summit Diner

1 Union Pl  
Summit  
New Jersey

Date:

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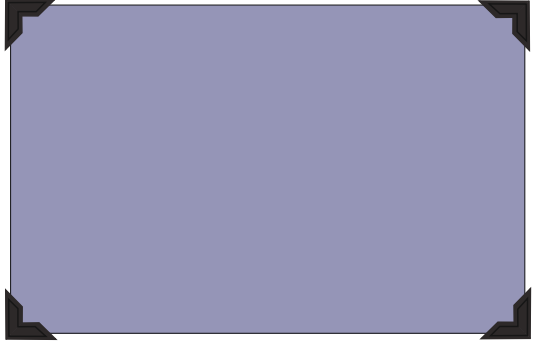




## D's Diner

587 E Main St  
Wilkes-Barre  
Pennsylvania

Date:



## Kuppy's Diner

12 Brown St  
Middletown  
Pennsylvania

Date:



# Highspire Diner

255 2nd St  
Highspire  
Pennsylvania

Date:

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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

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②	
③	
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## Salem Oak Diner

113 W Broadway

Salem, New Jersey

856-935-1305

One of the times I was here was during a diner tour of New Jersey. My stomach was not ready for any food. The Salem Oak put out some samples and I took one bite. Wow! I am really bummed that my stomach was being so uncooperative, the food was that good.





Silk City diners built a lot of similar looking diners. By 1953 they changed the design of their diners up a bit. The company added horizontal flutes to the exterior and changed the curvature of the ceiling so as to make the diner seem roomier. This may be my favorite style of Silk City diner, though the design of the Martindale Chief Diner on the Taconic Parkway would give a very good fight to my eyes.

Breakfast at the Salem Oak gives the customer more than a few options. You have the typical options like hot cakes, french toast. Of interest is that the Salem Oak Diner has both scrapple and taylor pork roll, talked about in this book for a couple of the diners. Usually a diner has one or the other, but the Salem Oak has both.

The Salem Oak Diner also has just as many options for lunch and dinner. They even offer mini meals, where most meals cost around \$10 and still gives you diner made soup, salad and then choice of a dessert like pudding, jello or ice cream. Some of the options include baked meatloaf, lasagna or stuffed flounder. Peter Genovese, an expert on New Jersey diners was especially impressed with the chicken athena.

Some people who reviewed the Salem Oak Diner say that the diner is located close to the Delaware Memorial Bridge. The diner is roughly 9 miles off of the Interstate. For many people 9 miles is too long to drive to go to a restaurant when you're traveling, but to me, it's a very easy choice to skip the chains by the exit and drive the nine miles to to Salem. I'm normally not in this area of the country, but hopefully I can find an excuse soon and visit the Salem Oak Diner again.

The Salem Oak Diner is a 1955 Silk City diner. It was opened on September 21, 1955. Bob & Ollie McAllister ran the diner in the 1960s up to 1975 when Bob (Bob Jr.) and his wife Barbara took over the diner and ran it until 2005. In 2007, Christine Zervas took over the diner and ran it until at least 2011. By 2015 Cafer Yardin was operating the diner with the help of his family.

The famed Salem Oak used to be across the street from the diner, so the name was a natural. The Salem Oak tree collapsed and died in the summer of 2019, but before then it was a nearly 600 year old oak tree that Quaker Jon Fenwick used for shade as he brokered a treaty with the Lenni Lanape Native American tribe. The tree gave the residents of Salem a sense of pride over the years.

Unlike the vast majority of diners in New Jersey, the Salem Oak Diner is original. A good number of diners in New Jersey are remodeled often and look more like a chain restaurant than a diner. Bob McAllister commented to Peter Genovese in "Jersey Diners" that if a tile goes missing on the floor, they take a piece of tile from under a certain booth that is tucked into a corner of the diner. There is a reason why both the Salem Oak and the Summit Diner are the only two diners listed in my book from New Jersey. Don't get me wrong, there are a few other unaltered classic diners left in the state like the Roadside Diner in Wall, Miss America Diner in Jersey City or the 54 Diner in Buena, and there are some unexpected gems in the rough like the Truck Stop Diner in Kearney, but to me the Summit and Salem Oak diners stick out just a little more.

**One other thing:** Wildwood, New Jersey

<https://wildwoodsnj.com/>

It is still 90 minutes from Salem to Wildwood, but for me, if I am that "close" I'm doing it. Not only is Wildwood a beach town and a place a large number of families go for vacation, but Wildwood is also a feast for roadside fanatics when it comes to neon signs and vintage motels and hotels. The Doo Wop Preservation League was formed in 1997 and "...is a celebration of architecture, design, music, pop culture and everything else that made Wildwood famous in its heyday of the 1950s and 1960s." The museum even offers tours of the 25 hotels and motels that are still exhibiting classic style.

Another museum to check out is the George F. Boyer Museum which is the area's historical society. When you're done with these two items, then you can go check out the beach and the boardwalk.

## Tastee Diner

7731 Woodmont Avenue

Bethesda, Maryland

301-652-3970

The Tastee Diner is one of those awesome diners of yesteryear that continue to thrive in an environment that has seemingly passed it by. The originality of the interior of the Tastee Diner is the icing on the cake that puts it on my list of favorite diners.







Bethesda today is a very upscale suburb of Washington D.C. So many upscale hotels and restaurants serving hip and trendy food of some many cultures and style. So many things about the Tastee Diner hark back to an older time. Even more, in an older time, most diners were open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and amazingly, the Tastee Diner is keeping that tradition alive. The diner would be a stalwart in any community. And although I'm not saying the Tastee Diner isn't a beacon of diner hope in a world it doesn't really fit in. There are probably a good number of people who would like to see the diner replaced. Fortunately there are enough people who realize just how important the diner is to the community. A place to keep the community grounded and real.

On the Tastee's website, they brag about serving a number of politicians and actors and actresses. But the true diner fan knows that what really makes a diner is its loyal customer base. These are the people that keep a diner functioning. And fortunately, people keep coming to the diner. What keeps them coming back? Probably a mix of the warm familiar comfort of the Tastee Diner and the food. The food doesn't try to be anything special, it is just good comfortable diner food.

For dinner you can get anything from a T-Bone steak or a piece of salmon, but you can also get diner items like liver and onions or cheeseburger royal. Breakfast and lunch are even more traditional. Items like bacon and eggs, hot cakes, burgers, club sandwiches and a few salads dominate the menu.

The Washington Post calls this Tastee Diner, “Maryland’s Most Famous Restaurant.” This Tastee Diner? Yes, there are other Tastee Diners. In Maryland there is a Comac built diner in Laurel and in Silver Spring there is a 1946 O’Mahony, although the diner acts more as a waiting room today. At one time the people running the Tastee Diner chain bought a Mountain View diner already in Fairfax, Virginia and called it the Tastee 29 Diner.

This Tastee Diner is an O’Mahony diner, said to be from 1935, although diner historian Spencer Stewart says it opened in 1938.. It was not moved to its current location until 1958 when it was taken away from its Wisconsin Avenue location. Eddie Warner started the Tastee Diners and later sold out to a Mr. Carver. Current owner Gene Wilkes bought the chain in 1970. Wilkes sold the Fairfax location and was looking to sell the Laurel location not too long ago.

The interior of the Bethesda Tastee Diner is quite original. They did have a fire a number of years ago, and the photos in this book are pre-fire. The layout is similar to the other O’Mahony diners in this book from the late 1930s time era. The floor tiles are similar too and are dominated by orange which is also on the tiles along the walls and counter. The diner probably had a marble counter, so I would presume that the current counter is not original. The diner does have additions that were placed on it for more seating. When I was at the Tastee, I always sat in the main diner. As Spencer Stewart mentions, “The dining rooms very nearly match the floor tile of the diner as well as its character.”

It is very fortunate that there are four O’Mahony diners all very close in age that are all in really good shape so that you can compare the subtle changes in style over the years from O’Mahony. Even better is that the food is really good in all four of these diners, so there is little reason not to visit all four.

**One other thing:** Washington D.C. by train

<https://wmata.com/rider-guide/stations/bethesda.cfm>

If you want to first walk off your meal, you could take the Bethesda Trolley Trail for cycling to and from Georgetown. Once that is done, you could take the red line train into D.C.. Judiciary Square which puts you closer to the Smithsonian or Union Station which is closer to the Library of Congress put you into downtown D.C. where most of the tourists end up. Chinatown is another option in this part of D.C.

## Kill Devil Grill

2008 S Virginia Dare Trail

Kill Devil Hills, N. Carolina

252-449-8181

The Kill Devil Grill is more than a diner. The diner is actually a small part of the restaurant. Behind the diner is a much larger restaurant that serves the majority of customers. If you're lucky enough to get a seat inside the diner, you will behold a fantastic Kullman diner that now serves as the bar for the restaurant.





Some places are pure diners, their architecture screams diner, their menu screams diner. The Kill Devil Grill has the first going for it, but the menu is way beyond your typical diner menu. But that is perfectly ok. The Kill Devil Grill shows its respect for the diner portion of its restaurant by keeping it in tip top shape and still operating it as a restaurant. But beyond the diner is a much larger restaurant that allows them to have many more customers, especially customers that do not like sitting at stools. (Can you imagine?)

I have only eaten once at the Kill Devil Grill, and the food left enough impression to push the mix of a rare beautifully preserved diner and a great menu on to my list of diners. To speak to that fact, the Grill is popular with both tourists and locals. Looking at their dinner menu, you'll really notice some things that are not diner like in the least. Virginia Cobia (a fish) served over stone ground cheddar cheese grits topped with local sweet corn and crab salsa. But you may see some of their other items at some of the larger diners. Things like, Chicken picatta, crab cakes dinner or a rib-eye. They even add fried chicken to their house salad. For sandwiches, they have a chicken sandwich and hamburgers, but they also use halibut for their fish sandwich.

So if you're vacationing in the outer banks, and you want something more than fast food, you really need to check out the Kill Devil Grill. And if you own this book, you like diners, so I hope you choose to sit in the diner part of the building.

The Kill Devil Grill is a Challenger model diner built by Kullman Dining Car Company of New Jersey. Kullman is one of the original diner builders, with Sam Kullman previously working for Tierney, before going out on his own. He first opened up the Pioneer Lunch Car Company in New Rochelle and when that didn't work out, he opened up a business in his own name and moved it to New Jersey. Things went well for Kullman. One of their tell tale signs in the interior of their diners is the ceiling. You can note this in the Kill Devil Grill. The ceiling is made up of panels with wide metal dividers in between each ceiling panel. From other similar diners, I believe the panels are covered with porcelain enamel, but I may be wrong.

Kullman started out building barrel roof diners. By the time the Kill Devil Grill was built, Kullman was using porcelain enamel vertical flutes on the exterior. Kullman would also later change to a flat ceiling. Some wider models would have a row of booths along the front windows. Obviously this would be a tough thing to do for a diner traveling a long distance from the factory, like this diner.

I believe this diner was originally Sam's Diner on US Route 1 in Richmond, Virginia. A postcard of that diner shows it with yellow vertical flutes, but everything else about the diner looks correct. Today, the flutes on the diner are painted blue. According to the diner's website, Bill Tucker found this diner sitting empty for three years, but it had been meticulously restored. Bill states the last name for the diner was Millie's Diner. Tucker bought the diner with the intention of incorporating it into a larger restaurant, which he has successfully done.

**One other thing:** Cape Hatteras National Seashore

<https://www.nps.gov/caha/index.htm>

The Outer Banks are a smorgasbord of commercial establishments catering to vacation goes with small children. But if you head a number of miles south through the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge you will reach a smorgasbord of nature in Cape Hatteras. It's really nice that some of the Outer Banks have been preserved, and kept mostly wild, because in many parts of the Outer Banks, it's vacation homes everywhere. There are even parts of the Outer Banks where you can see wild horses roaming around. Some of the things you can do include: taking an off road vehicle on the beach, camping near the beach, go fishing, or the more passive birding. If you like lighthouses, you are in luck on the Outer Banks. There are a number of lighthouses for you to visit and photograph.



## Hillsville Diner

525 North Main Street

Hillsville, Virginia

276-266-3066

The sight of an old diner in a small village could make you think of New England, but here you are, in southern Virginia. To see the success of the Hillsville Diner, it makes you believe that most towns in America could have a successful diner there.







I remember going to the Hillsville Diner one time, and they had this pitted grill in the diner part of the restaurant. I was wondering how they cooked all the meals on it. Turned out they were only cooking on it for the patrons in the diner part of the restaurant. In the back, there is a larger seating area, with a bunch of tables where bigger parties can sit, and for these customers, they cook their meals in the main kitchen. The larger dining room has a white and red tile linoleum floor and wood paneling.

Besides the cooking grill, most of the rest of the diner part of the Hillsville Diner is quite original. The back bar under where the grill would have been is original with the original cabinetry. The floor has a neat pattern where small tiles are split up into sections of 4 tiles. One group of four is a light tan, and the other four alternate between a black and a red color. The stool bases look original, but some of the stool tops look different than the others, but that's a minor quibble.

The menu at the Hillsville Diner is pretty traditional for a breakfast restaurant in southern Virginia. Their biscuits are good, and they have items like a tenderloin biscuit or country ham. Being in the south, the Hillsville Diner also offers grits on their menu. Lunch is also traditional with dependable home cooked meals like meatloaf or roast beef and mashed potatoes.

The Hillsville Diner is a barrel roof O'Mahony diner from some time in the 1920s. It spent a couple dozen years in Mt. Airy, North Carolina, or so the story goes. People say that a young Andy Griffith ate at the diner when it was in Mt Airy. One would really like to believe this story, as Andy Griffith is an icon in the radio and television entertainment world. One could imagine Andy sitting at the counter, maybe with his father, and watching in amazement at the short order cook whipping up some scrambled eggs, or maybe getting some biscuits and gravy.

And so you know, unless you got a really good baker, the biscuits down south are better than the ones up north and out west. Some of it does have to do with the baker, but a lot of it has to do with the flour. The south-east is known for its soft white flour, which makes the best biscuits. Other things like a cast iron skillet also help with the process.

Sorry, I got distracted by good biscuits. So the diner left Mt. Airy in 1946 and was moved to Hillsville, Virginia. Not too many diners were in Virginia over the years. Chatham, two hours to the east once had two trolley diners in their small village, but for the most part, diners did not populate Virginia. This is a shame though, because the way that the Hillsville Diner stands in downtown Hillsville, it looks so perfect. I can imagine people from neighboring Virginia and North Carolina towns saying to themselves, after leaving the diner, "I wish we had one of these diners back in our town."

**One other thing:** Crooked Road

<http://www.thecrookedroad.org/>

A lot of the roads in southwest Virginia are winding. They go up and down hills and into valleys everywhere. Today it is part of the charm of the region, but in the past, the crooked roads meant something else. The Crooked Road is Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, "A place of beauty. A place of song." The Crooked Road is Virginia's tourism effort of connecting country and bluegrass music in southwest Virginia. The Crooked Road connects and promotes places like the Carter Family Fold and the Birthplace of Country Music.

If you plan correctly, you can travel the road to attend concerts, festivals and jam sessions. For example, the Carter Family Fold has concerts every Saturday. The Floyd Country Store's Friday Night Jamboree is always popular. You can even head south to Mt. Airy and attend the Saturday afternoon Merry-Go-Round live performance. The road may highlight the history of its music, but what it does just as well, is to keep it alive through live performances, be them planned concerts or just spur of the minute jams.

## Salem Oak Diner

113 W Broadway

Salem

New Jersey

Date:

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## Tastee Diner

7731 Woodmont Ave

Bethesda

Maryland

Date:

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## Kill Devil Grill

2008 S Virginia Dare Tr  
Kill Devil Hills  
North Carolina

Date:



## Hillsville Diner

525 N Main St  
Hillsville  
Virginia

Date:



## Diner

Date:



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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

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②	
③	
④	

## Kappy's Subs

501 North Orlando Avenue

Maitland, Florida

407-647-9099

Kappy's is really a sub shop that happens to be housed in a Valentine diner. They are such a good sub shop that you can use the fact that they are housed inside a late model Valentine diner as an excuse to go out of your way to visit. If you're lucky, you'll get a seat at the counter.







I mentioned that you will be lucky to get a seat at the counter. When I visited, the inside counter area was closed for some reason, so no luck for me. "When I visited?" You're saying. Yes, I have only been to Kappy's once, and I put it on this list. Maybe it is because the diner reminds me of a similar diner that Salvage Candy in Evansville, Indiana has for sale. Maybe it is because the subs were that good. Maybe I'm just a sucker for small diners. Maybe it is all three things!

Floridian Magazine says, "The menu offers up typical diner food..." But really, the food at Kappy's is mostly subs. They have two breakfast items and only serve them Monday through Friday for a few hours. And both of these items are either a sandwich or a submarine. They also have hamburgers and shakes, and I guess if you have never been to a diner in the north-east, you might think a diner is just hamburgers and shakes. .

Kappy's is noted for their philly cheesesteaks. I did not know this before going to Kappy's so I just had a regular chicken submarine. It really hit the spot. Everything was good. I mentioned that the inside seating was closed. Kappys does a good takeout business, and they have a walk up window for ordering to-go and outside seating orders. Around the diner there are a number of picnic tables.

Remember the Kill Devil Grill? Not every diner building has to have a true diner style menu to be successful in the restaurant business.

If you are wondering about the Salvage Candy diner: It is a Valentine Big Chef diner. This diner started out in Olney, Illinois before moving to Noblesville, Indiana. Things happened, and by 2018/2019 Thomas Trem of Salvage Candy was able to pick up the diner. And you could buy it, as they are looking for a buyer!

Kappy's Submarines is housed in a 1964 Valentine diner. This model is called a Big Chef diner. Valentine offered the Big Chef in the 1960s. While the exterior was rather plain looking in comparison to their prior models, this diner was developed with the restaurateur in mind. It had ten stools and a window for ordering food without having the customer come inside. Something Kappy's takes full advantage of. The diner came with 55 cubic feet of space for frozen and perishable items and even came with a soda dispenser and a soft ice cream machine. The carry out window was placed right next to these two items, perfect for a take out business. The diner is 30 ft by 10 ft and even comes with a built in bathroom stall, just like the older Valentines had. It was everything you ever needed to run a restaurant.

The Big Chef is a boxy diner. The diners could come from the manufacturer in any standard color, and Kappy's is painted mostly white on the outside today. In the seating part of the diner, there are big picture windows. Inside this area are low sitting stools, not the typical ones like you would see up north for a diner counter. These are the typical Big Chef stools, though. The cooking is not done behind the counter. The cooking in the diner is done either behind the take out window area or in the back of the diner in the addition out back.

The diner was brought to Maitland in 1964, the place ran as a Whataburger for two years before closing. In 1967, Isadore Kaplan purchased the place and ran it until 1972 when Bob Caplan purchased the place. The diner has stayed in the Caplan family since then.

## **One other thing: Kennedy Space Center**

<https://www.kennedyspacecenter.com/>

I often try to find things that do not have more than a nominal cost of admission, but the Kennedy Space Center is one of the exceptions I made for the reader. Located about a hour east of Maitland, you will find yourself along the coast, and if you don't want to spend money, you could take US Route 1 or State Route A1A that round along the ocean in most spots.

The Rockey Garden is a unique part of the center. Here you can see old rockets from NASA's Mercury and Apollo missions in a garden like setting. Inside are things like the Astronaut Hall of Fame and child friendly attractions like Journey to Mars.

You can pay more for a number of bus tours to locations typically off limits and the opportunity to have lunch with an astronaut.

# Jack's Hollywood Diner

1031 N. Federal Highway

Hollywood, Florida

954-929-2888

This is a diner you would expect to find in the northeast outside of the metro areas. Friendly environment, loyal customers, good food at fair prices. If you are heading to Miami, make sure you head here for at least one meal, preferably two or three.





Not only did Mountain View diners look towards the mid-west to sell their diners in the 1950s, but they also looked at Florida. With Air Conditioning becoming more and more common in restaurants, the Florida market saw a number of diners enter the state in the 1950s. Jack's Hollywood Diner was one of these Mountain View diners that came to Florida in the 1950s.

Florida also saw a second wave of diners in the 1990s when a startup builder of diners known as Starlite Manufacturing

started building shiny chrome looking diners in Ormond, Florida. These newer diners help keep the visibility of diners up in Florida.

For most people, the first thing you will notice when you enter Jack's Hollywood Diner is the friendliness of the staff. The staff and ownership do a great job making first time customers feel at home, and between the attitude and the food, they keep the regulars coming back day after day.

The menu includes Greek favorites like Spanikopita and Mousaka along with diner favorites like hamburgers and milkshakes. There are also many other dinner favorites that keep the customers coming back in this 24 hour diner. When it comes to breakfast, they serve it all day at Jack's Hollywood Diner. There is nothing exotic on the menu, but what they serve, like the Little Smokies: two eggs and six smoked sausages is plenty enough and served at a very fair price.

The inside set-up of Jack's Hollywood Diner will remind a diner historian of the Liberty Dining Car Company's layout. A counter on the right side of the diner, and six booths on the other end, three on each side of the walkway. This design was necessary for Mountain View to send some of their diners to faraway locations like Florida or the mid-west. Jack's Hollywood Diner is a 1953 Mountain View diner. If a customer wanted more space, they could order multiple pieces that would be put together on site. Jack's is just a one section diner shipped by rail from New Jersey. The diner was then put in front of a kitchen, storage and extra space for a dining room. The front diner part acts as an advertisement and the back allows for enough customers to make a good living for the owners and waitresses.

The diner started out life as Freddie's Diner in 1953. Some time later, Jack and Wanita Garner purchased the diner and changed the name to the current incarnation. In 1985, a major renovation increased the size of the kitchen and doubled the seating capacity. In January 1995, the current ownership bought the place. Steve and Michael Grenier and father Denis Grenier also had the diner restored in 2011, but as I have never seen the diner before that time, I can not say how it looked before the renovation. Other than the sign being blown down by Hurricane Andrew and Katrina shuttering the restaurant for a week, Jack's Hollywood Diner has been a dependable restaurant option in the Hollywood, Fort Lauderdale area for many years and will hopefully stay that way for many more.

### **One other thing:** Everglades National Park

<https://www.nps.gov/ever/index.htm>

There is Alligator Alley along I-75 between Sunrise and Naples that has its own set of attractions, including Airboat Tours, but the main access to the Everglades is along US Route 41, the Tamiami Trail. The Tamiami Trail is the main commercial thoroughfare between Tampa and Miami and still has some relics of the past. Though time and new residents have decreased the numbers more and more as each year passes.

If you are adventurous, you can boat or kayak to explore the area. You can even bike or paddle-boat in certain sections. Or you can stick to more of the man made places like the observation tower or visitor center, of which there are four. The park protects the southern most 20% of the Everglades and is a unique part of America's landscape.



## Old South Restaurant

1330 East Main Street

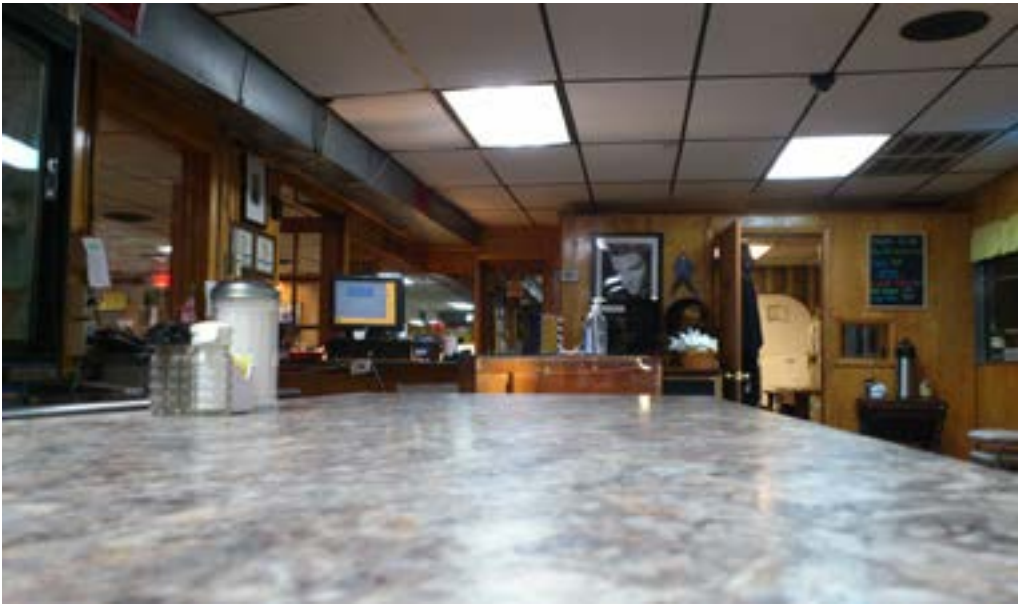
Russellville, Arkansas

479-968-3789

More of a modular restaurant than a diner, but the coffee shop part of the restaurant acts just like a diner. The food is quite good and the place has great classic atmosphere.







One of the reasons I searched out the Old South Restaurant is because it is a modular restaurant built kinda sorta in the style of a diner. It is a true old school business. Fortunately not much has changed in the operation or the restaurant or in the quality of the food. Even a closure for failure to pay taxes couldn't close the place for long. Residents of Russellville so adore the restaurant that they held a garage sale to raise money to pay the back taxes in 2013.

If you're looking for something unique you'll probably have to look at two items. One is their salad dressing. R.C. Sturb, who was ran the prototype restaurant in Fort Smith (see next page) developed a salad dressing for that restaurant that was also used in the Russellville Old South Restaurant. The other is fried pickles. This item is not unique to Arkansas any longer, but at one time they were. As [tiedyetravel.com](http://tiedyetravel.com) states, "The Old South actually holds Austin "Fatman" Burnell's original fried pickle recipe. Burnell created the Arkansas original back in the 1950s at the Duchess Drive-In in nearby Atkins." Besides the fried pickles other items you can get at the Old South include chocolate gravy on biscuits, fried chicken, fried catfish, Petit Jean ham and liver and onions. Petite Jean is a well known Arkansas bread of meats. Petite Jean was started by German immigrants in the 1920s in Arkansas.

The Old South Restaurant serves all three meals, so even though you can not visit the Old South 24 hours a day any longer, you can still get breakfast lunch or dinner. Breakfast is served all day and with the kitchen serving all three meals, you can get a pork chop, chicken, or even a K.C. Steak with your eggs. For lunch or dinner, they are well known for their house made cream soups, like Chicken and Dumplins.

Walter Snell of National Glass and Manufacturing Company of Fort Smith, Arkansas built this restaurant building for Woody May of Russellville. Snell had the prototype Old South Restaurant built in Fort Smith and began looking for other people to sell other similar modular restaurants to. He advertised his Fort Smith building as, "Is a knock-down metal building manufactured complete with equipment and fixtures ready to install on your lot." Snell didn't want a diner, he wanted a restaurant that could have a section that acted like either a coffee shop or a diner and then a separate dining room where most of the customers would go for their larger meals.

As the Old South's website states, "It's streamline design, round windows, soft metal skin, neon lights, aluminum fixtures and padded booths imply its Art Modern design." And this was the general design for all of Snell's modular restaurants. The Old South Restaurant was placed on what was then the outskirts of Russellville, on the main road for travelers between Tennessee and Oklahoma. For quite a number of years, the diner was open 24/7, even after US Route 64 was bypassed by an Interstate. The area has grown up and changed over the years, but the Old South has mostly remained the same. The exterior is the same and the interior has only a few updates over the years. The wood paneling seems mostly intact and the coffee shop/diner part of the restaurant still holds its counter and booth set-up like it was intended.

In recognition of the importance of the Old South Restaurant and the design of the National Glass built building, the building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in September 1999.

One other thing: Hot Springs National Park

<https://www.nps.gov/hosp/index.htm>

"The grand architecture of our nine historic bathhouses is equally matched by the natural curiosities that have been drawing people here for hundreds of years. The ancient thermal springs, mountain views, incredible geology, forested hikes, and abundant creeks – all in the middle of town – make Hot Springs National Park a unique and beautiful destination." Hot Springs does a great job of mixing National Park owned bath houses with other commercial businesses right across the street. You can tour a number of the bath houses to see a picture of the past and one of the bath houses is even still accepting customers to keep history alive. Beyond downtown, there are ample opportunities for some walking and hiking like you would find in any National Park. The drive down to Hot Springs is definitely worth it from Russellville.

## HandleBar Diner

5149 S Inspirian Pkwy

Mesa, Arizona

480-389-9911

This neat Valentine diner has seen a second life in Arizona. Really nice surprise to find a Valentine diner doing such a good business with a creative menu to boot.





When the Handlebar Diner first opened in Mesa, fans of the Welcome Diner in Phoenix thought that either this was a second location of the Welcome Diner or they were stealing their mojo. Turned out that practically nobody was aware of the Valentine diner company and that many of their diners looked very similar. To diners fans, the differences are obvious, but at the same time, there are enough similarities that the typical person could make the leap. It also didn't help that the Handlebar claimed their menu was, "southern-inspired, southwestern-executed diner" just like the Welcome Diner.

When the Handlebar Diner first opened up, the intention was to offer bagels and breakfast burritos for breakfast, but they may not be open for breakfast any longer. It is interesting that breakfast is not as popular of a concept in the western half of the country. For lunch and dinner the intention is to have spin-offs on the classics with Farm to Table food sources when possible. Many of their menu items have funny names like the "Stay at home dad" which is braised short ribs grilled cheese with cheddar and white american, pickled onions and fig & bacon jam on sourdough. They have other items that take things in a different direction. Items like the mac and cheese that has chimichurri or the Nashville Burrito with Nashville hot fried chicken, three cheese macaroni, black bean and corn salsa.

The diner also has an espresso machine and offers a number of coffees on the non-alcoholic side and a beer garden (many of them local) and a number of cocktails similar to the Hi-Lo Diner in Minneapolis.

The Handlebar Diner is a 1940s Valentine diner. A 2013 article on the diner gives us what we currently know about its history. The article states that the diner was in a total of five locations in Nebraska over the years. Alton Johnson of Loveland, Colorado had it hauled 650 miles from Adams, Nebraska to his home in 1992 where it would stay for two decades. Johnson was a car buff and never got around to restoring the diner. Gene Stiles got a hold of the diner and fixed it with intentions to operate it in Loveland, but it never panned out. He put it for sale in 2015 and it was purchased by a developer in Arizona.

The diner was purchased by Scottsdale-based builder DMB for a location in a planned community in Mesa. The community was planned for a site that saw a former life as the old General Motors Desert Proving Grounds. Employees at the Mesa proving grounds did important work to help solve the problem of vapor lock, among other things.

In the designed community the diner was intended to be the first food option available to residents. It was also intended to increase social connections for the residents as the diner is located in the community center part of the community and close to a park.

The diner opened up in Mesa on April 25, 2017. One of the more noticeable changes to the diner was that the current owners put a pylon on the diner to give the diner a little more flair. The owners hired Adam Allison of Left Coast Burrito Company and Kyle Hollenbeck of Aioli Gourmet Burgers to operate the diner and craft its menu. The diner has 11 stools inside, but also offers more than 60 additional seats on the outside of the diner at tables.

**One other thing:** Bisbee & Tombstone

<https://www.discoverbisbee.com/> & <https://tombstoneweb.com/>

This one is a stretch, because the destination is over three hours away from the diner. But then again, everything is bigger in the west.

Bisbee started as a mining town. As mining died down in the 1970s, “an influx of creative free spirits found Bisbee’s historic district to be an attractive, inspiring, and inexpensive location to settle and pursue their artistic endeavors.” Bisbee has a nice assortment of inns, restaurants, shops and museums that make a stroll around the town quite enjoyable.

In Tombstone, “Step back in time and enjoy the Old West Atmosphere of the “Town Too Tough To Die!”” The town is a mix of real life museum and tourist attraction. It is worth a trip, especially if you were already headed to Bisbee.

## Kappy Subs

501 Orlando Ave  
Maitland  
Florida

Date:



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## Jack's Hollywood Diner

1031 N Federal Hwy  
Hollywood  
Florida

Date:



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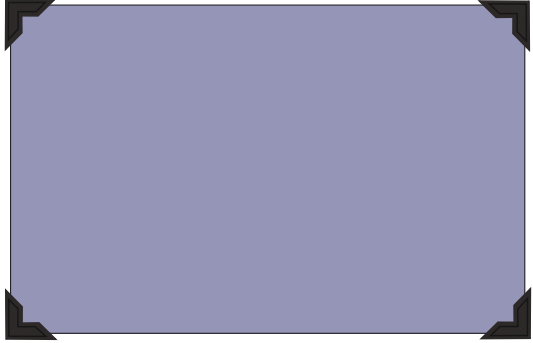


## Old South Restaurant

1330 E Main St  
Russellville  
Arkansas

Date:

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## Handlebar Diner

5149 Inspirian Pkwy  
Mesa  
Arizona

Date:

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## Diner

Date:



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## Other Things

Some of the other highlights found while visiting these diners include the following places.

①	
②	
③	
④	

Back Cover: The bottom photo is somewhere south-west of Sidney, Nebraska. The top photo is the last known diner built by the Goodell Hardware Company of Silver Creek, New York. This diner has special meaning to me.

The diner started out in Wellington, Ohio around 1927. It may have spent a few months somewhere else, but only rumors circulated about that. Around 2002, the diner was planned to be replaced. I contacted the owner to let them know that if no one was interested, I would be interested in saving the diner. So, with the help of diner expert Daniel Zilka and his assistant at the time Toni Deller, the preparation for the removal of the diner was accomplished. The diner languished for a few years before Gordon Tindall stepped in. Gordon took the diner from me and restored it to what it looks like today. He ran the diner for a number of years in Lanesboro, Minnesota, six months a year in this summer vacation village. Gordon has the diner for sale, and if you do consider buying it, you better darned well keep it as original as possible. There is a right way and a wrong way to expand your business with this small 30 foot by 10 foot diner.





All of the photos on this and the previous page are from when Gordon Tindall owned the diner and are from the years 2007 to 2010. On the previous page, the diner was pretty close to being down to its frame, with Gordon taking out bad pieces of wood, and shoring up the frame. When the diner was in Wellington, Ohio, most of the back wall was removed for easier access to the building in the back. Sadly, in the 1990s, the front wall was cut below the windows, taking away much of the structural integrity.

The photos on this page, show the interior as it was being put together in 2008. The bottom photo shows the diner in the winter of 2010. At the time, Gordon was still putting some finishing touches on the diner.